

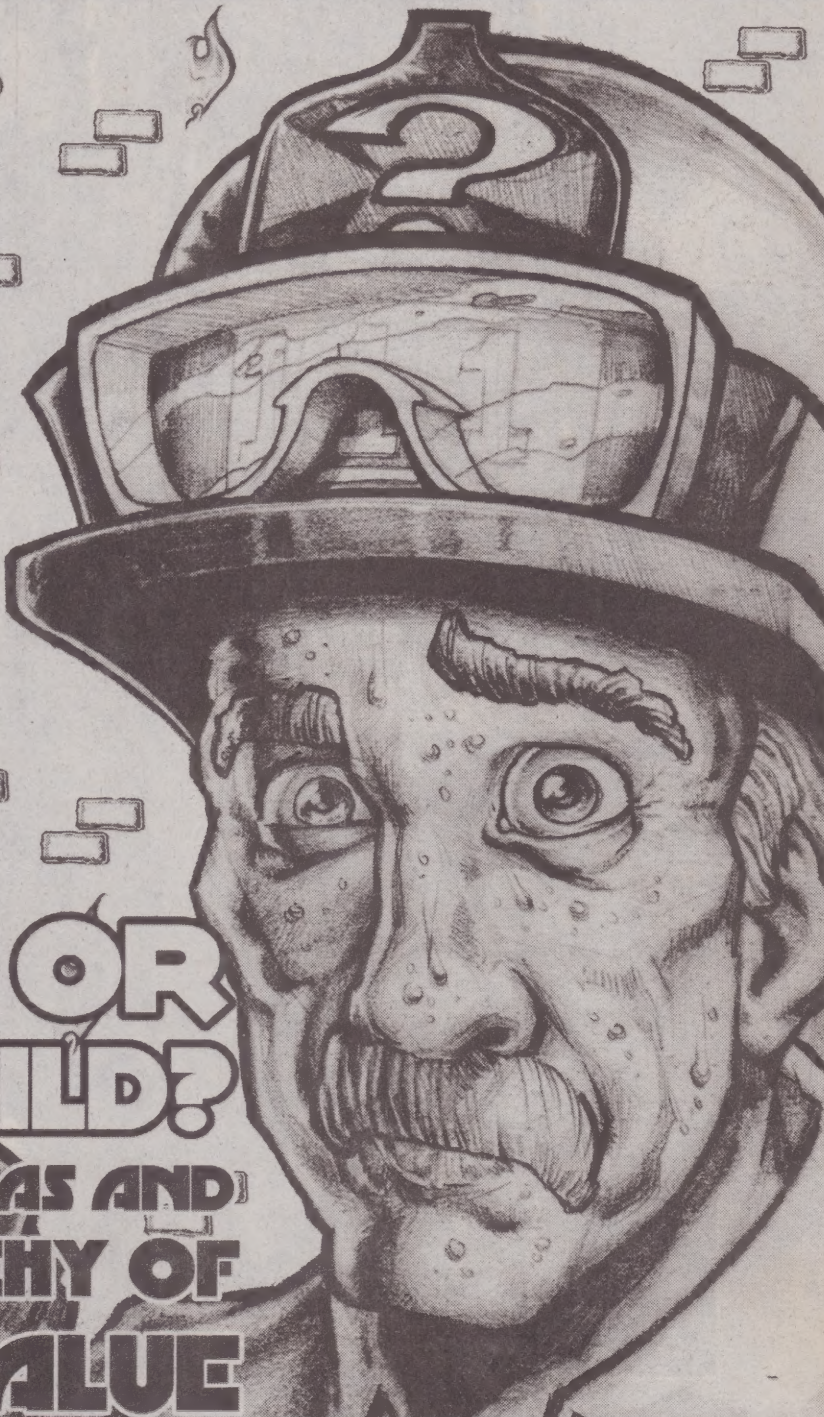
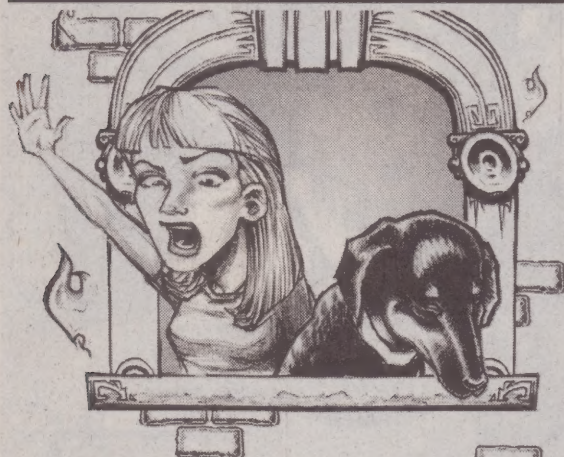
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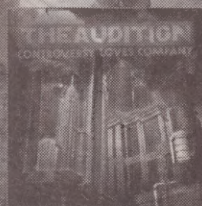
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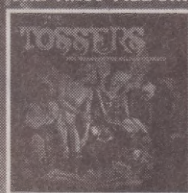


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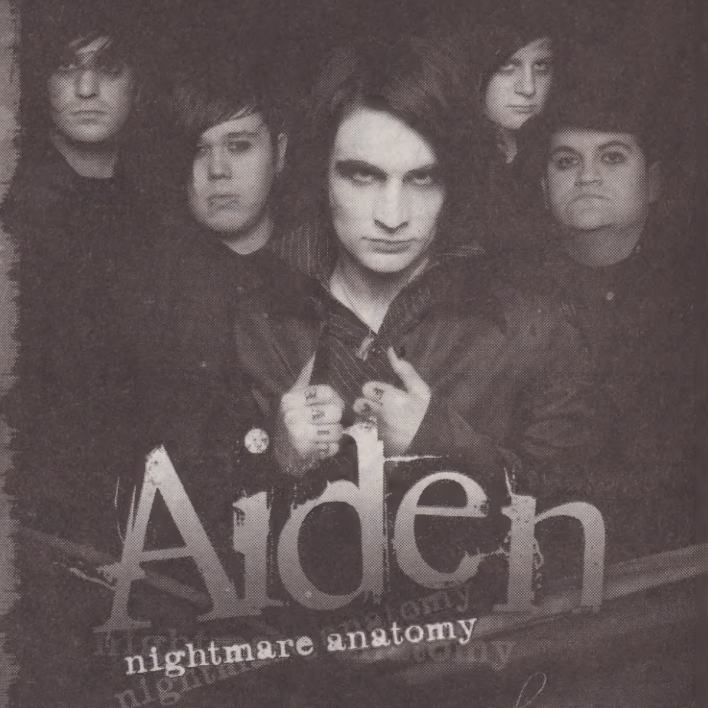


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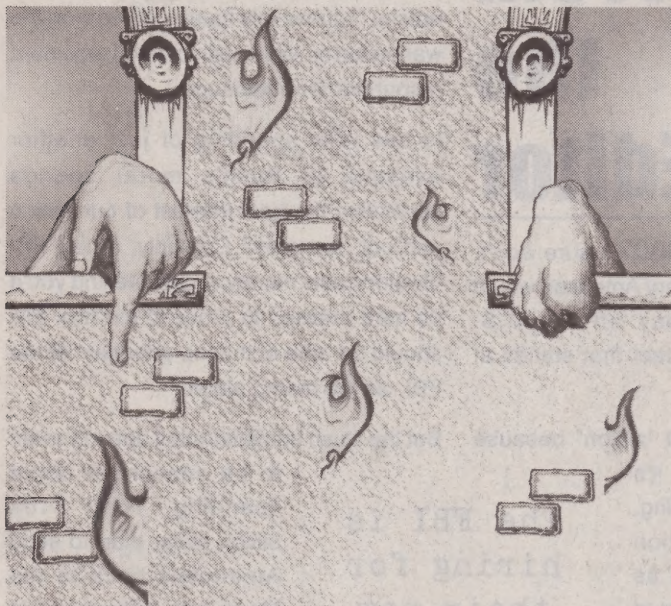
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IMPACT PRESS • ISSUE 58 • FALL 2005



MY DOG OR YOUR CHILD? ETHICAL DILEMMAS AND THE HIERARCHY OF MORAL VALUE

by Dr. Steven Best

Humans are endlessly creative in constructing artificial situations that allegedly "prove" that the interests of Homo sapiens always count more than other species. But it ain't always so. Dr. Best breaks down the old "My Child or Your Dog?" scenario and reaches some surprising results. • PAGE 26

"We have enslaved the rest of the animal creation and have treated our distant cousins in fur and feathers so badly that beyond doubt, if they were able to formulate a religion, they would depict the Devil in human form."

-- author and professor William Ralph Inge

"The urge to save humanity is almost always only a false-face for the urge to rule it." -- author H.L. Mencken

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Overpriced Musings: The Rise of Collective Consciousness by Don Pflaster When the meek inherit the earth, it may have nothing to do with control freak managers deciding to give up their power. • PAGE 12

Cut Out Dissection, Opt For More Humane Alternatives by Heather Moore With each animal students slice open, they learn to disrespect and devalue non-human sentient beings. Biology is the study of life, yet young people learn nothing about life by cutting into dead animals. • PAGE 14

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Is Socialism Really Dead? by Dr. David Micheal Smith Americans who think that socialism is dead apparently do not realize that Marxist groups and individuals continue to be some of the most steadfast activists for peace, progress, and social justice at home and abroad. • PAGE 32

Peter McLaren & the 3 R's: Reflection, Resistance, Revolution by Dr. David Gabbard Professor McLaren has worked at the forefront of an effort to draw attention to the multiple ways in which America's schools are implicated in the corporate-led assault on democracy here at home and the resurgence of U.S. imperialism abroad. • PAGE 38

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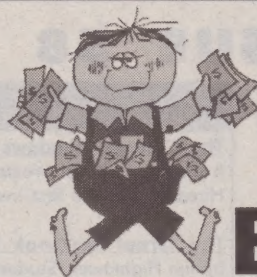
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A Fact from IMPACT: The American Society of Civil Engineers has determined that more than 3,500 dams maintained by state and local governments are "unsafe."



"I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves, and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education." -- Thomas Jefferson



From the Editor

DO YOU HAVE \$26,000? I sure don't. But that's how much every American would owe if we had to pay off the U.S. government's current debt that stands at nearly \$8 trillion.

We may as well call it "zillion" because that amount is so high, it's hard to imagine it existing. The Bush administration refers to themselves as conservatives who claim to be for smaller government and reduced spending, but this administration is more loose and irresponsible with the country's wallet than a 16-year-old girl with daddy's credit card at the mall.

Many will argue that we're in this spot because Bush had no choice. We were attacked and had to respond. Tax cuts were needed to help the economy. We have to go to the Moon to continue our space exploration program. We need a special division in the FBI for investigating adult porn.

Say what?!

'Tis true, my friends. On July 29, FBI headquarters sent a memo out to all 56 field offices informing them of a new job opportunity. The FBI is hiring for their new anti-obscenity squad. It's not targeting child pornography, but the kind made by and for adults. The new squad will need eight agents, a supervisor and support staff. As

one unidentified FBI agent told *The Washington Post* in a September 20 article, "I guess this means we've won the war on terror. We must not need any more resources for espionage."

Is this wise spending or just another example of Bush's moral agenda sacrificing the best interest of our nation and our economy? Certainly, a new FBI division costs money to operate and you'd be hard pressed to prove to me how this should be "one of the top priorities" of the FBI, as the memo stated.

But the Bush administration doesn't seem to be concerned about spending. Their \$104 billion dollar plan to send Americans back to the Moon was announced in September, as well. With a monster deficit and with possibly \$200 billion needed to recover from devastating Hurricane Katrina, should we really be discussing spending of that level at this time?

The FBI is hiring for their new anti-obscenity squad. It's not targeting child pornography, but the kind made by and for adults.

Of course, Bush certainly won't consider pulling back his tax cuts (that benefit the wealthy) despite our increasing deficit. We're not leaving Iraq anytime soon and the cost of that Bush-induced disaster is approaching \$200 billion.

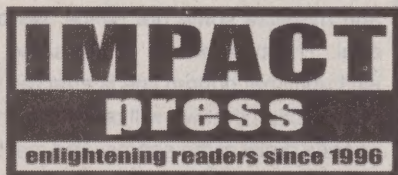
With the insult-to-injury of late September's Hurricane Rita likely to cost our country billions more, it's time for the Bush administration to get their priorities straight. It's time to roll back the tax cuts, get the hell out of Iraq and truly consider what's in the best interest of our country's citizens—and not just the rich, corporate supporters who stuff our legislators' pockets full of cash.

• craig mazer •

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IMPACT:

Anticipation greeted me when I picked up the summer issue of IMPACT. The cover article, "The Crisis in the U.S. Anti-War Movement and How to Overcome It" by Dr. David Michael Smith, had great potential. Unfortunately, I was sorely disappointed by what lied in wait.

The article should more appropriately been titled "How to Keep the U.S. Anti-War Movement Irrelevant." The heavily partisan rhetoric bordered on absurdity. For example:

- Smith states as fact that "Much of the hard work needed to build the anti-war movement in the U.S. had been done by various Marxist and socialist organizations and peace groups." This is insulting and misrepresentative, as that it artificially places Marxists at the forefront and everyone else underneath them.

- In conclusion, Smith posits that "most Marxist and socialist organizations agree on several basic principles," and proceeds to enumerate them. Well, that's great for most Marxist and socialist organizations, but perhaps it would have been better for the half of the U.S. population who would like to see most troops withdrawn this year to provide some direction that is not exclusive to this marginal point of view.

- "While Marxists and socialists will certainly play a leading role in the rebuilding of the movement, we must recognize that a genuine mass movement will require the participation of large numbers of people from other political backgrounds." Why does Smith feel comfortable assuming that the audience for this piece (the "we") is composed of Marxists and socialists? Additionally, the second clause of the sentence is extraordinarily obvious. The fact that Smith feels a need to point it out shows the degree of detachment from rank and file Americans.

My point here is not to disparage socialist organizations, but rather to recognize that, if our goal is to create a mass movement, we must listen to what ordinary Americans' concerns are and work on their terms. While organizing, one can only act as a vessel for other people's wants - you cannot tell them what to do and how to do it, nor put words into their mouths. After all, it's not a Marxist or socialist movement. It's an anti-war movement, and it belongs to every adherent equally. People don't want to be treated as the minions of Marxist groups, and as long as that is how Smith envisions the anti-war movement, it will remain marginal, ineffective, and in crisis.

Sincerely,
Genevieve Hirschmugl

IMPACT:

It was good that Dr. David Smith in "The Crisis in the US Anti-War Movement" (Issue #57, SUMMER 2005) pointed out that a definitive majority of the American public does not support the U.S. government's occupation of Iraq. But I think that the analysis of why anti-war activists haven't made solid grounds towards ending the occupation struck me as very unconvincing. I honestly think that the reason there is a crisis in the anti-war movement is because the anti-war movement has tactically been confined to traditional and tired ways of legal political action. The fact is, as Smith acknowledges in the article, millions of people marched on February 15 and 16, 2003 to express opposition to the impending invasion and that it had absolutely no bearing on the actual invasion. Smith also acknowledges that a great deal of effort from some anti-war activists was put into the electoral process...yet another course of action that had no bearing on the occupation.

The only point that rung a bell with me was the final one that Smith felt was only

worthy of one paragraph: the point that "business as usual" must be disrupted. This is the only general tactical point of view that the anti-war movement has not explored with serious commitment. I think the reason the U.S. government can invade a sovereign country even in the face of international opposition is because it is profitable to elites that own and manage most of the country.

In this case, mostly energy companies and defense contractors are cashing in. Why should they give a crap about people marching in the streets with signs? Just cordon off some streets and mobilize some riot police. No big deal. The bottom line is the same. It isn't until that bottom line is affected by direct action that we will really see this agenda crack at the seams. And maybe when we do, the anti-war opinion will be energized because for once it is seeing tangible results.

Some people in the anti-war movement have been pursuing these means, but with little support from liberal and Marxist elements. And as long as liberal and Marxist elements that dominate large, moneyed anti-war organizations continue to recycle the same old, tired, and officially-sanctioned legal tactics that most people are convinced will do nothing, then I think the anti-war crisis will continue.

Sincerely,
Darren Kramer

IMPACT:

Every sane person wants peace, but trying to appease an aggressive dictator just leads to a bigger war. The horror of the 'peace movement,' now and at the time of Hitler, is that it emboldens tyrants to defy mandates against armaments and invade their neighbors; or does anyone believe that if Saddam Hussein had succeeded in acquiring weapons of mass destruction he would

Speak Your Mind. . .

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not have used them? We are now trying to establish a comparatively democratic regime in Iraq, as we did in Germany and Japan, and then leave. Is there a better alternative?

Thank you,
Ralph Meyer

IMPACT:

Who's running the show? Certainly not the men and women who CLAIM to be running it. The real revelation from Katrina, from one end of this nation to the other, is that the people we've elected to protect us average Joe's are incapable of protecting us.

Yes they have a plan, but their plan doesn't work. When something goes

wrong the first thing they do is hold a press conference and spin some variation of George Bush's infamous words, "What went wrong?"

Obliviousness. Utter detachment from the needs of regular people. When the Louisiana National Guard is in Iraq for a year fighting for oil, instead of in Louisiana where it's supposed to be, what can we conclude?

With oppressive gas prices and a bungled response to a long-predicted catastrophe it's clear our needs are not being served. So whose needs ARE being served by the prodigious productive output of American society? Could it be that we wake up every day and work our butts off servicing the needs of corporate vampires? The oil companies, Halliburtons, and defense

contractors that profit from war and catastrophe? Was *The Matrix* right? Are we simply human batteries who generate energy for corporate monsters that have no concern for our well being? Do these corporate vampires suck energy out of us and zap other parts of the world with it in an endlessly cruel fantasy of global expansion? Why should we pay the ultimate price for that?

We need systemic change in America and that leadership is not going to come from either major political party. We need to reorganize the priorities of this nation, putting people before corporate expansion, and we can't wait another minute to do it.

Rich Zubaty

NOAM CHOMSKY

THE IMPERIAL PRESIDENCY

Sovereignty, Terror, and the "Second Superpower"

It's Noam Chomsky vs. the Bush Regime in this much-anticipated spoken-word release. Recorded in November 2004, just after the reelection of George W. Bush, Chomsky pinpoints the principle commitments of the current administration. In the name of expanding markets and controlling access to key natural resources we've seen the blatant undermining of democratic practice, contempt for binding International Law, restriction of civil liberties, and the use of war crimes to further foreign policy objectives. This is not another cataloging of the offenses and blunders committed by George W. Bush, but a lively chronicle of the systematic power plays which have effectively wrenched power from citizens' hands and made the world an increasingly unstable place to inhabit.



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THE COLUMN

SHADOWS ON THE SIDEWALK

by Morris Sullivan

I VISITED HIROSHIMA 20 YEARS AGO, at the end of a 10-day tour of Japan. My brother was in the military, stationed in Korea, and my entire family met him in Tokyo so he could spend leave time with his family without having to waste several days of it traveling and dealing with jet-lag. My son, who turned 21 yesterday, was tiny at the time. He started eating solid food in Japan, which perhaps explains his love of sushi.

We toured Japan in the spring. There was still snow in the mountains when we began, but the cherries began blooming while we were there and peaked about the time we reached Kyoto. I still have vivid images of the gardens at Heian Shrine, complete with psychedelic pink clouds of cherry blossoms.

Cherries bloom for only a few days. When the trees in a city are blooming at their peak, offices close for the day so their employees can go to the park and enjoy the cherry blossoms while they picnic and drink beer.

We arrived in Hiroshima the day the blooms at Peace Memorial Park were at their most vibrant. We stayed at a hotel right next to the park, but we got there in the evening. It had rained all afternoon; it wasn't a hard rain, but hard enough to knock the petals off the cherry blossoms.

After we settled in, I decided to go for a jog in the park. It wasn't quite dark yet, but almost. The sky had turned that deep, clear blue that twilight sometimes turns a cloudy sky. It was tough to jog, because the park was full of people. Apparently, the people of Hiroshima had decided not to let a little rain interfere with their enjoyment of the cherry blossoms.

I tried to run for a while, then gave up and just walked along, enjoying the cool of evening and the infectious happiness of the Japanese revelers who were intoxicated by the beauty of cherry blossoms and large quantities of beer. The celebrants had been consuming beer so freely there were mounds of beer cans scattered through the park.

The rain had knocked the cherry blossoms off the trees. Everything I saw had a thin coating of damp pink petals.

Alongside a clump of trees and beneath a sodium vapor light stood a mountain of beer cans and bottles. Like everything else, it was covered in wet cherry blossoms. A few people squatted

around it, drinking and gazing bleary-eyed at an aging gentleman who stood swaying over them with an electric guitar slung around his neck. The guitar was connected to a little Pignose battery-operated amplifier. He grinned like a lunatic and played "Sakura," the "cherry blossom song," over and over. He was covered in damp flower petals.

It was one of the most beautiful things I had ever experienced.

The next morning, I tried jogging through the park again. At dawn, the mountains of beer bottles had been removed but the ground was still damp and everything was still covered with damp cherry blossoms, except where the mounds of beer cans had stood, where the absence of cherry blossoms etched shadows onto the sidewalk.

Peace Memorial Park commemorates the center of the blast, where the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. In the light of morning, I could see the memorials to those killed by the bomb. I slowed to a walk as I went past the "A-Bomb Dome," a western-style brick building that had stood directly beneath the blast.

The Japanese have preserved the ruin as it was after the U.S. dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima at 8:15 a.m. on August 6, 1945. The Hiroshima Prefectural Commercial Exhibition Hall was instantly consumed by heat from the atomic blast above. Everyone in it was killed. Because the bomb detonated directly overhead, some walls and the wire framework of the building's dome didn't collapse.

The park's luxuriant, manicured turf grows right up to the rubble at the base of the walls. It is a uniquely disturbing sight.

As a lesson in impermanence, the A-Bomb Dome paled alongside granite steps of a bank that once stood nearby. To this day—and for many years hence—the steps bear the images of people that sat on them that morning, waiting for the bank to open. The intense heat vaporized the people and turned the granite white, etching their shadows onto the steps.

I saw that, and couldn't imagine what kind of monster would use such a weapon against other beings.

On August 6, 2005, those shadows turned 60 years old. Many peace organizations held events to commemorate the 60th

Katrina offers us a chance to recognize that we have been systematically electing people who are so far removed from ordinary American experience, they are incapable of making sound public policy.

anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. Perhaps you attended one.

I'm involved with a small Buddhist group in my town. We got wind of a contemplative commemoration planned in St. Petersburg, which is on the other side of the state. It was sponsored by the Tampa-area Buddhist Peace Fellowship and Pax Christi. A few of us decided to go over and participate in the commemoration.

About 30 people or so showed up. We meditated and talked about peace. A Polynesian nun spontaneously began a chorus of "Ain't Gonna Study War No More." Those of us old enough to know the song joined in. We decorated lanterns, which we intended to float on the water. It was a moving experience.

As I said, that was in early August. Now, in post-Katrina America, that scene seems very long ago. But August 6, 2005 kept coming back to me. For the first time in my life, I have heard an American city—New Orleans—compared to Hiroshima. At least in terms of lives lost, the comparison is an overstatement. At this writing, no one has yet counted all of the New Orleans' dead, but it will be far less than the hundreds of thousands that died in the bombing of Hiroshima.

Nevertheless, there are similarities. The tragedies at Hiroshima and New Orleans each resulted from a combination of enormous natural power and willful human ignorance. The disaster Katrina wrought was exacerbated by decades, if not centuries, of greed and complacency—by politicians overlooking the environmental consequences of their decisions in favor of the short-term economic gains.

As sad as it sounds, Katrina offers humankind a great opportunity. This is not opportunity of the variety suggested by the President's mother, who seems to think that if a person is

poor, they will welcome having their home destroyed and family uprooted. Rather, Katrina offers us a chance to recognize that we have been systematically electing people who are so far removed from ordinary American experience, they are incapable of making sound public policy.

Perhaps the Gulf Coast catastrophe will encourage the nation to acknowledge that issues like conserving a natural riverscape and reducing oil consumption aren't just "tree hugger" issues.

These things affect us all. Perhaps the effects of the disaster on our economy will help us realize that no municipality is an island—that we may all suffer when one state, one county, one city makes bad decisions.

I suspect Katrina will fade into memory fairly quickly. America seems to have developed a frighteningly Orwellian knack for forgetting about things. For instance, a few weeks ago, all of America seemed to be calling for Karl Rove's head. Now Rove is reportedly running around the Gulf Coast arranging no-bid reconstruction contracts for the President's buddies.

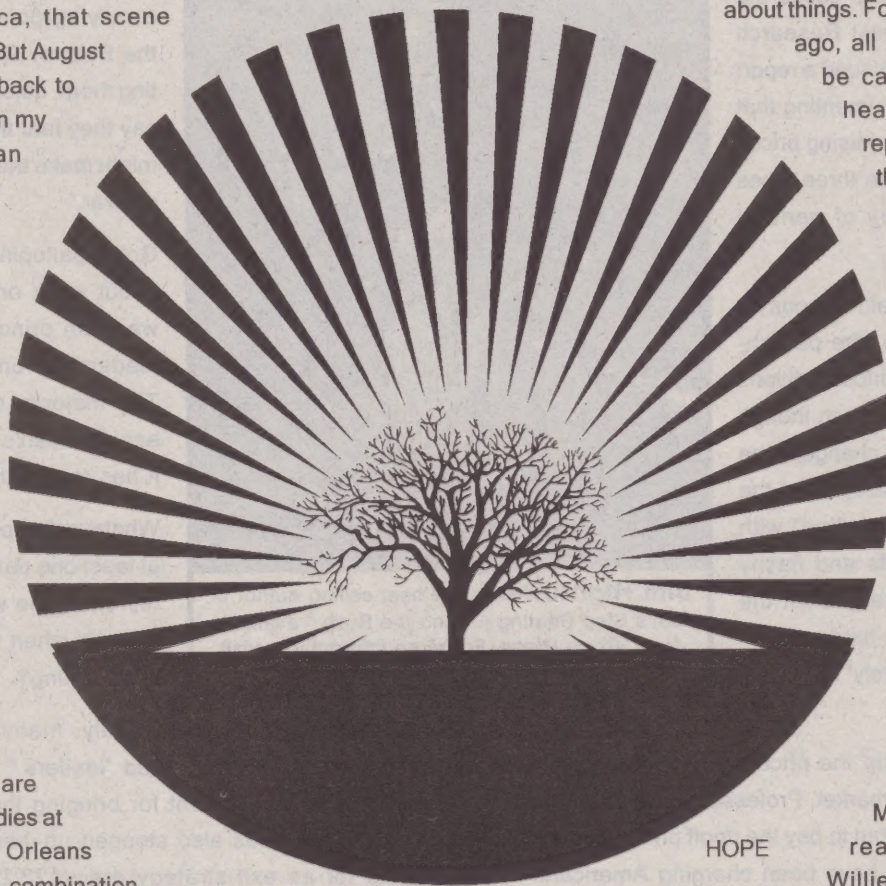
Chances are, no one will bother to commemorate Katrina's 60th anniversary. But let's hope that before the storm is forgotten, we can learn some of the things she tried to teach us, before these lessons become nothing but shadows.

HOPE
Maybe we'll even realize some of what Willie Dixon told us would happen if we decide we ain't

gonna study war no more:

The money spent on bombs alone
Can build poor people a happy home
Something good we can do
You treat me like I treat you

Contributing Editor Morris Sullivan has written for IMPACT press for most of a decade. A freelance writer and award-winning journalist, Sullivan lives in DeLand, Florida, where he helps lead Sangha West Volusia, a small-but-growing ecumenical Buddhist fellowship.



The Great Textbook Robbery

In recent weeks, on campuses all across America, another wave of bright-eyed and bushy-tailed students have been enrolling in university. Ah, what an experience—the camaraderie of college spirit, the titillating possibilities of higher learning! Then these eager innocents go to buy their textbooks, and wham—the dispiriting reality of corporate greed whacks them upside the head.

Students, already beleaguered by skyrocketing tuition and fees, now face sticker shock when purchasing required texts. A congressional study finds that students today are averaging \$900 per semester for books. A watchdog group called the California Public Interest Research Group (CALPIRG) has issued a report called "Ripoff 101," documenting that the giant publishers are raising prices of college texts at a rate three times higher than the prices of general books.

CALPIRG finds three main reasons for the inflated costs. One, the publishers issue new, higher-priced editions every three years or so, even though there's little substantive change in the material. Second, at least half of the books are now sold "bundled" with unnecessary CD-ROMs and flashy workbooks that drastically bloat the price—even though two-thirds of college faculty say they "rarely" or "never" use these add-ons.

Third, publishers jack up the price simply because they can. Students are a captive market. Professors say, "buy this book," and there's little choice but to pay the ripoff price. Also, like drug companies, publishers have been charging Americans more than they charge consumers overseas. On average, the exact same books cost 20 percent more here than in England, for example. In many cases, the overcharge is much greater: a calculus textbook, for example, sells for \$132 here, but only \$62 in Britain.

The good news is that students, some faculty, and a few lawmakers are fighting the gouging. To learn what steps you can take, go to this web site: www.maketextbooksaffordable.com. ☐

Finding the Democratic Party

Excuse me, but has anyone seen the Democratic Party?

An outrageous war of lies rages in Iraq. Nearly 2,000 American troops have died there; Iraq itself is spiraling down into civil war and theocracy; a growing majority of Americans now see Bush's policy for the disastrous deceit that it is; and grassroots America is alive with a burgeoning peace movement. But where are the congressional Democrats?

AWOL, that's where—cowering in indecision and fear. Rather than standing up to the ideological extremism of the Bushites and giving the public a rallying point for anti-war action, the Beltway Democrats are just sitting there, quiet and motionless. They say they fear that opposition to Bush might make them appear to be "weak on war."

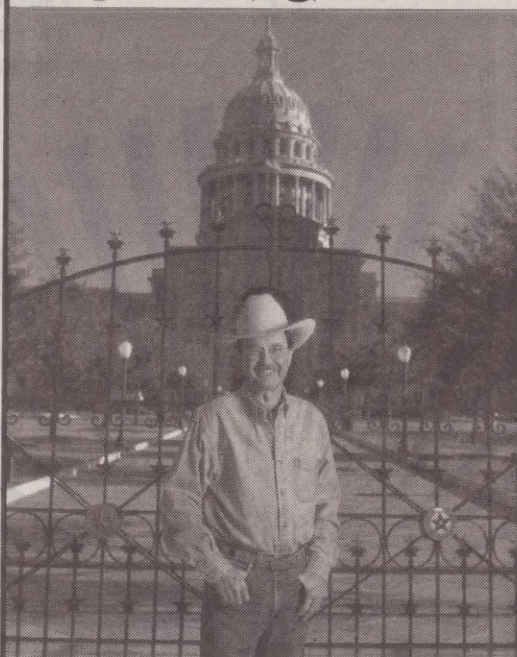
Great galloping gutlessness! What about weak on peace? What about weak on principle, on integrity, on leadership, on political backbone? The majority of Americans is now against Bush's war and believes that it has made America less secure.

Whatever happened to the notion that at least one party in congress should represent the will of the people, especially when the other party is so dead wrong?

Luckily, many Democrats are not waiting on their weak-kneed "leaders." Sen. Russ Feingold, for example, is out front for bringing the troops home. Rep. Lynn Woosley has also stepped up—her amendment in May calling for an exit strategy drew 123 Democratic (and five Republican) votes. Also, state Democratic parties are taking action: Arizona recently became the seventh state party to call both for bringing our troops home and fully funding veterans' benefits.

A new group called Progressive Democrats of America is organizing at the grassroots to put the kick back in the Democratic donkey. It's about time. To connect with them, visit www.pdamerica.org. ☐

By Jim Hightower



Jim Hightower is the best-selling author of "Let's Stop Beating Around the Bush," available from Viking Press. For more information, visit www.jimhightower.com.

The News Media Are Knocking Bush - and Propping Him Up

In September, we heard a lot of talk about journalists who got tough with President Bush. And it's true that he has been on the receiving end of some fiercely negative media coverage in the wake of the hurricane. But the mainstream U.S. press is ill-suited to challenging the legitimacy of the Bush administration.

The country's largest media institutions operate on the basis of enormous respect for presidential power. Major news organizations defer to that power even while venting criticisms. Overall, mass media outlets restrain the momentum of denunciations lest they appear to create instability for the Republic.

Initially, when the lethal character of Bush's "leadership" became clear in New Orleans, the journalistic focus on federal accountability was quick to bypass the president. For several days, the national political story seemed to mostly revolve around the flak-catching FEMA director, Michael Brown, a cipher who obviously was going to be tossed overboard by the administration.

On September 13, the day after Brown resigned, President Bush adjusted the damage-control weaseling. "Katrina exposed serious problems in our response capability at all levels of government," he said at the White House, "and to the extent that the federal government didn't fully do its job right, I take responsibility."

It was a classic hollow statement, meant to sound important and meaningless at the same time. On September 14, more than a dozen paragraphs into its story headlined "President Says He's Responsible in Storm Lapses," *The New York Times* reported: "In saying he took responsibility for any failures of the

federal response to the storm, Mr. Bush stopped short of acknowledging that he or anyone else had made mistakes."

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So, according to the *Times* headline, Bush said that "he's responsible" for "storm lapses"—but according to the article, Bush did not say "that he or anyone else had made mistakes." Got that?

Sure, we can expect more outcries of condemnation from the nation's press. Many news outlets have adopted a critical tone unmatched by previous coverage of the Bush administration. But you might read the editorials of virtually every daily newspaper in the United States and not find a single paper calling for the impeachment or resignation of the deadly Bush-Cheney duo, whether for deceptions about Iraq or failures to protect lives from Hurricane Katrina.

By avoiding even the hint that President Bush and Vice President Cheney should be ousted from office, major news outlets

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kind of punishment would truly fit the crime? ❧

By Norman Solomon

Norman Solomon is executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy, a nationwide consortium of public-policy. His newest book, *War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death*, was published in June 2005 by Wiley (www.warmadeeasy.com). His columns and other writings can be found at www.normansolomon.com.

are circumscribing public discourse and limiting the prospective remedies. Meanwhile, we hear about low-level resignations, official investigations and proposals for blue-ribbon commissions.

What happened to thousands of people in the path of the hurricane was the horrific result of criminal negligence that came from the top of the U.S. government. Is it too outlandish to suggest that the news media begin to discuss what



The Rise of Collective Consciousness

It has been a solid truth since the beginning of democracy, but it should be blindingly obvious, especially now, that we cannot always put our trust into our elected leaders. For though they command vast resources, and they profess to mean well, they are a mere handful of fallible humans who lack the perspective and experience to deal with the greatest of crises from the top down. Even in the corporate world, leaders frequently hand down mandates to their employees and make sweeping decisions without the slightest idea of the effect it will have, and when the shit really hits the fan, they jump from the sinking ship, leaving struggling underlings holding the bag. Meanwhile, the inflated bureaucracy that they have created spends more time deciding how to cover their asses rather than fix the situation.

It is clear that top-down management in general is beginning to see its decline. Good business and good governments know this, and the rigid hierarchical structure of companies past has definitely begun to pancake. They're pushing the team mentality more and more, trying to make management more robust in its ability to solve problems. There are just too many good opinions about a great many subjects at the bottom and not nearly enough at the top.

When the meek inherit the earth, it may have absolutely nothing to do with control freak managers deciding to give up their power; it will happen all by itself, for our destiny is not to have one person dictating to us from on high. The future lies in collaborative networks of ordinary and not-so-ordinary individuals who can create a sort of anarchistic framework for perpetuating the knowledge of humankind. The free Internet started this in earnest, and now the progress of our civilization has been telescopically and irreversibly accelerated. As a collective, humans today are smarter than they have ever been, and they are getting smarter.

The phenomenon of *wikis*, or web applications to which users contribute their own information, is an incredible example of this collective consciousness at work. The first of these was created in 1995, but only now are they beginning to truly become mainstream. The Web site wikipedia.org, a wiki-based encyclopedia, has an exhausting amount of information in it that is updated as events happen. In fact, the name comes from the Hawaiian word *wiki wiki*, which means *quick*. Entries in these vast databases are not subject to a rigid, biased editorial board, but are edited by users themselves, and have revision

When the meek inherit the earth, it may have absolutely nothing to do with control freak managers deciding to give up their power; it will happen all by itself, for our destiny is not to have one person dictating to us from on high.

control built-in so that the occasional nasty post or factual inaccuracy from a problem user can be undone. It certainly sounds like a recipe for chaos, but it *works*, and works incredibly well. I have seen entries in Wikipedia, specifically about Space Shuttle missions and Hurricane Katrina, which had detailed accounts of things that happened that very morning. I have seen entries about obnoxiously obscure subjects, ones that would never be published or even considered in something like *Encyclopedia Britannica*, such as definitions of vulgarities referenced by two movies in all of history (such as *shart*), and descriptions of lesser monsters from the game Dungeons & Dragons. This is more than just 24-hour news. This is fast becoming the entire compendium of our race's knowledge, and it is being updated on the fly.

We are in a new age where lies are becoming increasingly difficult to support and maintain, because it is so extremely easy to fact-check. So much of the human experience is now documented exhaustively by amateur and professional alike, it certainly makes the writers' and politicians' jobs more convenient, but much more tiring.

And to power all of this collaborative genius, "open source" software, such as Linux, is beginning to take over computers all around the world. This is software not developed and tested by some super-rich, secretive megacompany in Washington State, but by a huge community of users who report bugs and fixes, constantly trying to break and improve the systems that they use. Rather than having a company put out a press release about a security flaw in their software that hackers can then exploit, hackers are on the side of good from the very beginning to constantly audit the software and make sure the loopholes are closed before those on the side of evil can even begin to take advantage. The cliché in this

case might read: Several thousand heads are better than several dozen.

Even if one does not have vital information to contribute to a wiki, or patches for important security flaws, they can share the minute details of their lives through blogging communities, which are often linked to the blogs of dozens of friends, forming a new collective network of personal information and support. In these enlightened times, I rarely have to tell people what's new in my life, because they've already read about it a few hours earlier, and I can share my opinions in a place where I know they will be read by those who truly care about me. This is something I certainly never would have envisioned four years ago.

In the absence, of course, of a brutal single-mindedness, a crowd of diverse individuals will perform greater than the smartest person in the crowd. There are researchers who study the power of a crowd versus the power of a single leader, and the results are definitely promising. But the greatest of experiments are happening in our world right now, in real time, with no control group. This is the ultimate grassroots revolution, and now that we are all banding together to solve problems, the future is starting to look at least a little bit brighter.

All we need to do is get the rest of the world out of poverty and connected to each other, as quickly as

we possibly can. ■



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Read: *The Wisdom of Crowds* by James Surowiecki
<http://www.randomhouse.com/features/wisdomofcrowds/>

WikiMedia's Wikipedia
<http://www.wikipedia.org>



CUT OUT DISSECTION

OPT FOR MORE HUMANE, EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVES

BY HEATHER MOORE

AND BY FRANK REYNOLDS

Every year, millions of frogs, cats, mice, rats, worms, dogs, rabbits, fetal pigs, and fishes are used in classroom dissections. With each animal they slice open, students learn to disrespect and devalue non-human sentient beings. Biology is the study of life, yet young people learn nothing about life by cutting into dead animals.

Because dissection is inhumane and unnecessary, it has fallen under increased scrutiny and more and more students are becoming conscientious objectors. Schools in California, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Virginia, as well as entire school districts in Austin, Tex., Columbus, Ohio, and Clark County, Nev., have implemented dissection choice laws and policies that allow students to refuse to participate in dissections and other classroom exercises that are harmful to animals.

Lana Paolillo, curriculum director of Santa Fe's Public Schools, where a ban on dissection is under consideration, said "There is really no reason in this day and age to carve up animals. I support [the students] actually" ("Schools may stop dissecting real animals," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, May 21, 2003).

Opt for Alternatives

In general, student choice laws require schools to notify students and/or their parents at the beginning of a course if a dissection is planned, allow students to choose humane alternatives, and protect students from being penalized if they refuse to dissect.

Although students in other states and students in some private schools, colleges, and universities are not covered by these laws, they can still get an alternative. Students simply cannot be forced to participate in harming animals.

This right is protected under the First Amendment of the Constitution—a legal precedent established in 1987 by then California high school student Jenifer Graham, who was outraged when

she received a lower grade because she refused to dissect a frog in biology class. She filed a lawsuit against the school board and a lengthy legal battle ensued, but, thanks to Jenifer's determination and perseverance, the state of California signed a bill into law in 1998 mandating alternatives be granted to elementary and secondary students opposed to dissection on moral grounds.

Jenifer's case against her school was settled without a trial and she was awarded a reinstatement of her grade. She received an "A." Her high school was ordered to pay her legal fees. Jenifer's actions even inspired an award-winning CBS *School Break* special entitled *Frog Girl: The Jenifer Graham Story*. Perhaps most importantly, Jenifer paved the way for other students to object to dissection.

Student Objectors

When Jo Powell enrolled in a Human Anatomy and Physiology class at Portland Community College in 1997, she had no idea that, after years of studying botanical medicine and therapeutic herbalism, she would be expected to dissect a rat, or that she would be mocked and belittled for refusing.

But Jo fought back and she won. "I used the PETA outline on implementing a student choice policy, and a list of medical schools that use no animals, compiled by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM)," Jo wrote in a personal testimonial published on the Web site for InterNICHE, the International Network for Humane Education. "The process was quite straightforward from there. I sent official letters to the relevant deans, respectfully requesting a formal Alternative to Dissection Student Choice Policy and to be kept informed as an alternative program was implemented. I told them that because of my 'sincerely held religious and moral beliefs about the sanctity of life' I was unable to participate in any non-human animal dissection practices."

Jo had to wade through some red tape and meet with a number of school officials, but a month after she politely reminded the dean that schools had been sued for compromising students' religious rights, a formal policy was installed.

More than 20 universities across the country, including Cornell, Sarah Lawrence, Radford, Loyola, Wright State, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Virginia Tech, have student-choice policies.

Students in middle and high schools have also won the right to alternative assignments.

Laurie Wolff of Clark County, Nevada prompted the entire Clark County School District—the seventh largest in the nation, with 277 schools—to enact a student choice policy.

When she was in the sixth grade, Laurie, a straight "A" student,



refused to dissect an earthworm and was given a "C" for the class. Two years later, at her grandmother's urging, Laurie decided to take a stand so that this injustice never happened again. She asked her eighth grade classmates at Garrett Middle School in Boulder City to sign a petition and presented it to the school board at a meeting in December 2001. She then asked the school district to provide all pupils with an alternative to dissection. Four months later, the Clark County school board drafted a student choice policy. The board voted unanimously for the policy at its April 11, 2002 meeting.

After the policy passed, Laurie told the *Las Vegas Sun*, "You don't learn anything about an animal by cutting it up. It's a waste when there are so many other ways to learn about science without having to kill something first" ("School board approves dissection waivers," April 12, 2002).

On September 23, 2002, not long after the Clark County decision, Jennifer Watson, a 16-year-old honor student at Kenwood High School in Baltimore, dropped out of her anatomy and physiology class after a school district administrator told her mother, Maria, that a cat dissection was an integral part of the course and could not be completed without it.

Maria had contacted Kenwood High after the first day of school when Jennifer was told that the dissection would be required. She offered to purchase a CD-ROM kit for her daughter to use as an alternative to dissection, but never heard back from the school. She approached Baltimore County school district ad-



ministrators, who rejected the idea as well.

With help from the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), Jennifer and her mother then addressed the school district at a board meeting and asked for an official, written dissection choice policy. Two days later, Jennifer was back in class after the Baltimore County School District called Kenwood High and informed the school that they had an unwritten policy to allow students alternatives. The incident captured nationwide media attention and several other honor students objected to the dissection.

Every year, more and more students opt not to dissect. This past January, Doylestown, Pa. high school student Christie Vischer and other members of Central Bucks West Animal Rights Club decided to fight for alternatives at their school. The students contacted Animalearn, an organization that helps educators and students find non-animal methods to teach and study science, for pamphlets, newsletters, and ideas, and put together a bulletin board in the science wing of the school to introduce the issue to the student body.

The students then compared the school's dissection expenses to that of alternatives and compiled a packet of information. Christie gave a speech about the cost efficiency of alternatives before the Central Bucks School Board. Two reporters approached Christie and an article appeared in her local newspaper. She was summoned to see the principal, who offered his help and support. Later, Christie met with the district science coordinator, who agreed to order some alternatives for trial use.

Fight for Your Right Not to Dissect

If you're a student and you find out a dissection is planned in your class, meet with your teacher as soon as possible, politely

tell him or her that you cannot participate because of your "sincerely held religious and moral beliefs about the sanctity of all life" (this wording will meet the five criteria protected under the First Amendment) and ask for a non-animal alternative. It is important to state your position in writing and keep copies of all correspondence and take detailed notes at meetings.

Research alternatives beforehand, and show that you're willing to spend an equivalent amount of time and effort learning the lesson using a humane alternative. Make it clear that observing a dissection isn't an acceptable alternative—it's indirect participation.

Using computer software and books to learn biology is not only more humane, it's safer, more accurate, and more economical since schools can make repeated use of one CD-ROM whereas dissection requires that multiple animals be purchased time after time.

DissectionWorks from ScienceWorks includes an interactive computer simulation of frog, earthworm, crayfish, perch, fetal pig, and cat dissections. VisiFrog from Ventura Educational Systems includes an identification game and a self-quiz. Operation Frog by Scholastic, Inc. simulates an actual dissection on the computer. The Digital Frog from Digital Frog International is a fully interactive CD-ROM that allows students to explore the frog through three seamlessly linked modules—dissection, anatomy, and ecology.

Body Works from Software Marketing Corporation offers a computer program that explores the body's systems, structure, and functions. Sniffy the Virtual Rat from Wadsworth is a unique computer program that allows students to explore psychology using a virtual rat. CatLab from Interactive Technology Group is a fully interactive, multimedia dissection of a cat. Great American Bullfrog from Denoyer Geppert is a large-scale model with numbered parts and key card. Circulatory, reproductive, and other systems can be separately dissected. Biology Chart Series (Denoyer Geppert) includes detailed charts of a dissected frog, perch, crayfish, grasshopper, earthworm, etc.

Many books also offer humane science lessons. *The Anatomy Coloring Book*, *The Zoology Coloring Book*, and *From Guinea Pig to Computer Mouse: Alternative Methods for a Progressive, Humane Education* are appropriate for high school and college students.

Some animal protection organizations, including The Humane Society of the United States, The American Anti-Vivisection Society, The Ethical Science and Education Coalition, and health and non-animal research advocacy organization the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine loan humane alternatives to students and schools. The National Anti-Vivisection Society also offers a toll-free Dissection Hotline at 1-800-922-FROG (3764).

If your instructor isn't receptive to your concerns, proceed up the chain of command. Write to the principal, the superintendent, even the whole school board, if necessary. Provide copies of all correspondence to every school official you meet with.

Pass around a petition, hand out leaflets, set up an information table, and show PETA's anti-dissection video, "Classroom Cut-Ups," to your teacher, classmates, or a member of the administration. (You can borrow a copy of the video, and get a free "Cut Out Dissection" pack, by e-mailing PETA2@peta.org.)

If school officials still think that they can violate your rights, it may be necessary to contact the Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF). The ALDF may be able to put you in touch with an attorney in your area who can help. Most cases don't need to go to court; they can often be settled with a phone call from an attorney.

Fortunately, with a growing number of students speaking out against dissection, schools are becoming increasingly receptive to alternatives. Sometimes all you have to do to get an alternate project is ask. While it can never hurt to ask, it can hurt countless animals not to. ☐

Heather Moore is a staff writer with *People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)* and is a regular contributor to *IMPACT* press.

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PETA2

<http://www.peta2.org>

The Humane Society of the United States

<http://www.hsus.org>

Animalearn - Animals, Ethics & Education

<http://www.animalearn.org>

National Anti-Vivisection Society

<http://www.navs.org>

Jo's Full Testimonial

<http://www.interniche.org/consh/c-jo.html>

ScienceWorks

<http://www.scienceclass.com>

Ventura Educational Systems

<http://www.venturaes.com>

Scholastic, Inc.

<http://www.venturaes.com>

The Digital Frog

<http://www.digitalfrog.com>

Denoyer-Geppert

<http://www.denoyer.com>

Wadsworth

<http://www.wadsworth.com>

Interactive Technology Group

<http://www.itgworld.com>

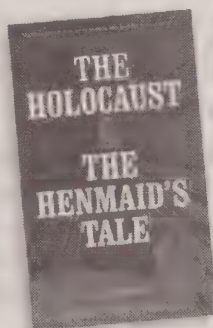
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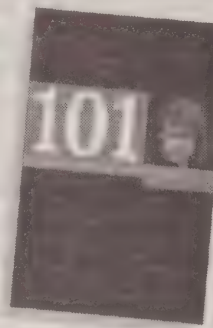
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Karen Davis, Ph.D. is the founder and President of United Poultry Concerns.



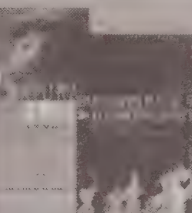
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Pamela Rice is the founder of the New York City-based nonprofit VivaVeggie Society.



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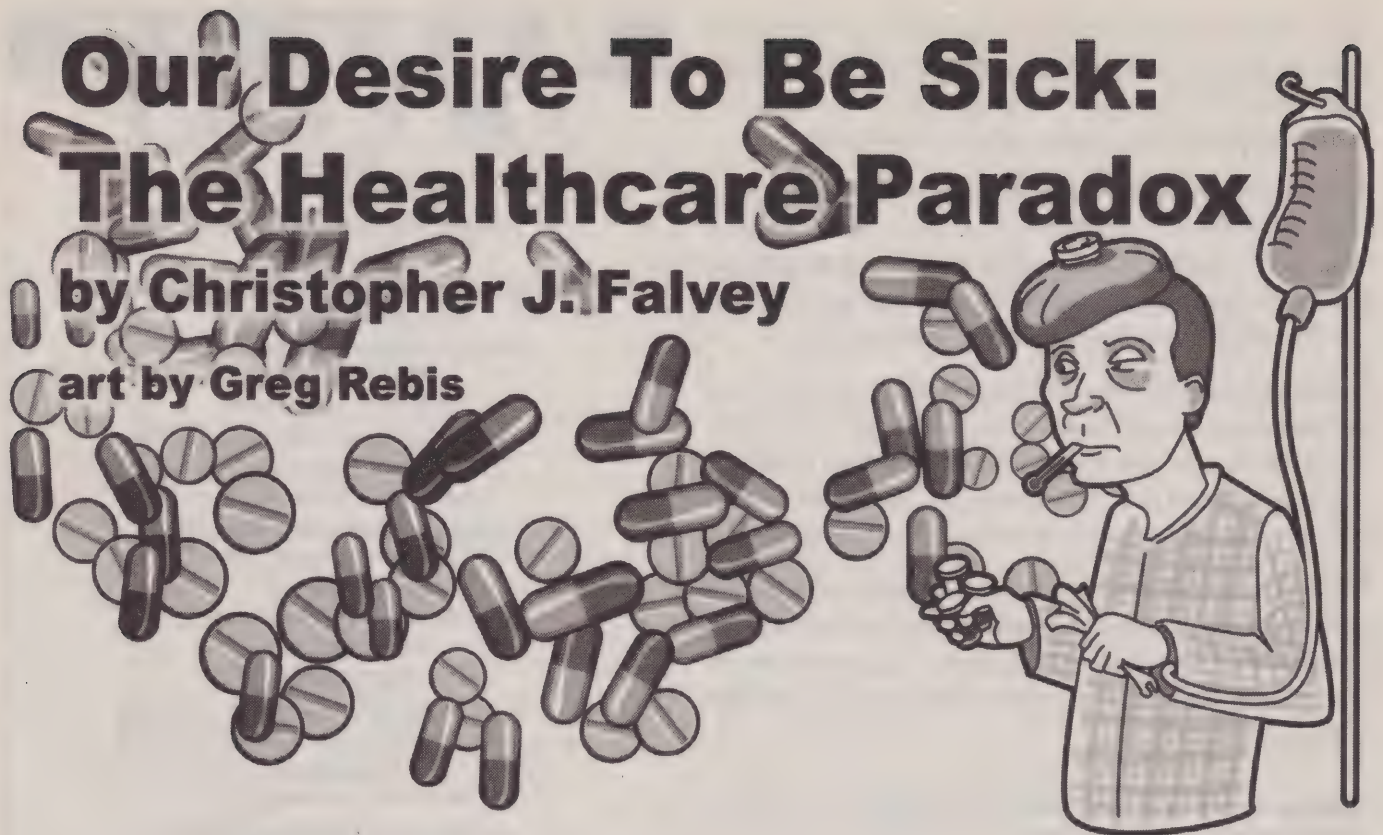
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Our Desire To Be Sick: The Healthcare Paradox

by Christopher J. Falvey

art by Greg Rebis



WE DON'T HAVE A HEALTHCARE PROBLEM IN AMERICA.

When you reach the point where both the haves (read: multinational corporations) and the have-nots (read: everyone else) are each complaining that healthcare will "lead them to bankruptcy," the issue ceases to be a problem and becomes a paradox.

In the ultimate zero-sum game that is our free market economic system, when all sides of the equation are having the same "problem," it usually means the real issue is being missed or ignored.

On the surface, it certainly seems like an economic issue: Healthcare costs a lot of money; who is going to pay for it? Is healthcare too expensive? If so, is it a result of too many lawsuits? Is it due to shady controls on imported drugs?

Money, however, is neither the problem nor solution here. It can't be. Healthcare is such a large and all-encompassing cost center that by the nature of a free market economy, no matter who writes the check, we're all going to pay for it anyway.

Illness as a Pastime

Stripping economics out of the debate, we're left with the less-discussed question: why are we so sick? I believe this does get us a little closer to the crux of the issue, but it's a position that has its logical flaws as well. Decade by decade we find that

pollution declines, dangerous activities like smoking decrease, and life expectancy continues to rise. Yet our "need" for healthcare also rises. Something just doesn't compute.

Thus, I would take the "why" out of the above question and ask: are we really this sick?

We can't possibly be. But we certainly think we are. It is this dichotomy that finally beings to shed light on the real healthcare problem in America. The reasons are complex, ingrained in everything from our cultural attitudes towards illness to the way we approach the marketing of healthcare.

Over the years, as each and every one of us has matured from child to adult, our culture has become more and more accepting of illness and the need for care. While this attention we give our health certainly has important benefits (e.g. discovering diseases at an early stage), our obsession over personal care has morphed into the positive reinforcement of being sick in general. Children are taught that with illness comes the unquestioned benefit of not having to go to school for a few days. And "calling in sick" is the predominant way American workers temporarily remove themselves from the stresses of their jobs.

At the end of the day, we've all learned that illness is a safe place for us to be. It may start as completely dishonest, or a slight over-exaggeration, but any psychologist will tell you that if you want to be sick, it's not that hard to trick the mind and body into really being sick.

At one time in our history being sick was, quite frankly, a bad thing. Without the benefits of the technology we have today, being sick meant crops were not harvested, industrial output was slowed, and basic needs such as food, water, clothing and shelter were in danger of not being met. Now, I am not one to extol the qualities of 19th Century living—I like my cozy life as much as anyone—but I do find it dubious that as Americans gain more and more free time, they tend to fill it with being sick.

Selling the Symptom

Lack of individual responsibility is, I believe, the predominant force behind the healthcare crisis in America. That is not to say, however, that American corporate culture and its marketing philosophy are off the hook here. As with any marketing trend, consumers and suppliers work in tandem. An examination of the recent tendencies of pharmaceutical advertising brings to light another element of our real healthcare problem.

Advertisements for drugs, diets and other such solutions to health problems have permeated all media outlets, from television and radio to magazines and billboards. Theoretically, there's nothing wrong with the concept of marketing healthcare. Marketing is how we communicate in a free market, and drugs—on the surface—have historically proven to be much more beneficial than dangerous.

The problem lies in the subtleties of the advertised messages. Rather than focusing strictly on the symptoms that the said product assists in treating, the advertisement focuses on the feeling the consumer will achieve by using the product. Many drug advertisements don't even mention the symptom they supposedly treat. "Take the green pill and you'll feel great!" "No, take the beige pill and you'll be refreshed and back in

action!" Why one might need the drug in the first place is never addressed.

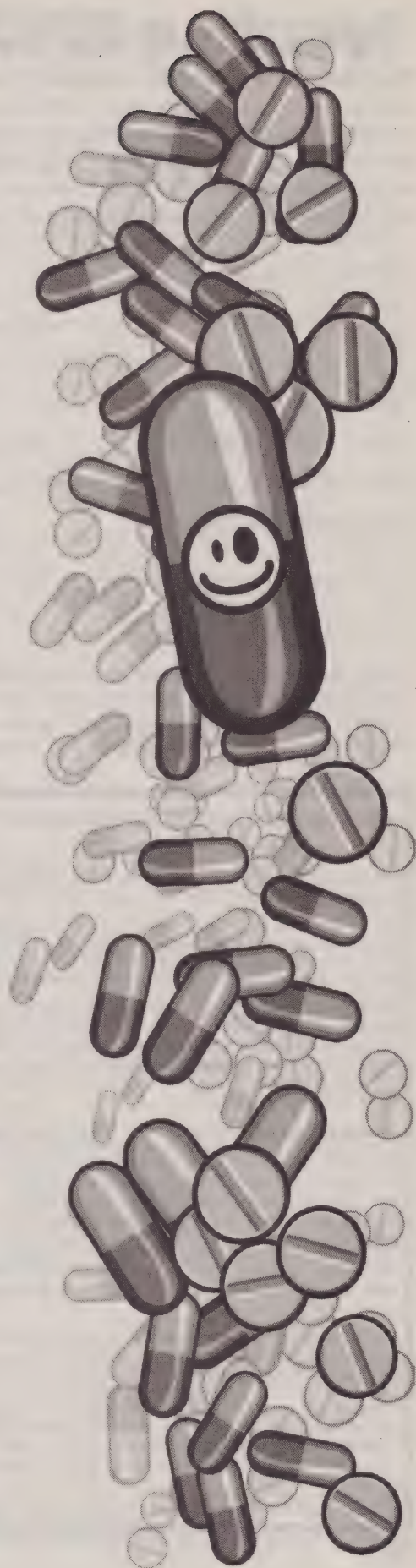
Selling the sizzle over the steak is a long-standing marketing principle. It makes sense for most consumer goods because, in most cases, we don't actually need the product as much as the advertiser needs us to buy them. That's fine, as this is a big part of why our economy moves and grows much faster than other types of economies. However, when it comes to drugs and healthcare, this is a very dangerous way to go about business. This marketing approach requires the consumer to want the symptoms in order to achieve the benefit said marketing offers. For example, the message should be: "If you're depressed, take product XYZ," but the message actually reads: "If you want the benefits of product XYZ, maybe you should consider whether you might be depressed."

Inevitable Bankruptcy

So where does this leave us in the debate on healthcare? I'll leave the economic and procedural arguments to the pundits to chew on over the next few years. I'd argue that these points are secondary to the real problems with American healthcare—problems that, unfortunately, may require a lot more effort on everyone's part.

At the core, our cultural attitudes and corporate marketing in tandem have created a perilous desire in all of us to be sick. Until we, as a culture, move to a more pragmatic view of how much healthcare we actually need, such collective desires will inevitably bankrupt any healthcare fix we can dream up. ❖

Christopher J. Falvey is the editor of the online magazine THE VN/VO. He can be contacted at <http://www.vnvo.com>.



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Libertarian Party's Statement of Principles (www.lp.org)

We, the members of the Libertarian Party, challenge the cult of the omnipotent state and defend the rights of the individual.

We hold that all individuals have the right to exercise sole dominion over their own lives, and have the right to live in whatever manner they choose, so long as they do not forcibly interfere with the equal right of others to live in whatever manner they choose.

Governments throughout history have regularly operated on the opposite principle, that the State has the right to dispose of the lives of individuals and the fruits of their labor. Even within the United States, all political parties other than our own grant to government the right to regulate the lives of individuals and seize the fruits of their labor without their consent.

We, on the contrary, deny the right of any government to do these things, and hold that where governments exist, they must not violate the rights of any individual: namely, (1) the right to life - accordingly we support prohibition of the initiation of physical force against others; (2) the right to liberty of speech and action - accordingly we oppose all attempts by government to abridge the freedom of speech and press, as well as government censorship in any form; and (3) the right to property - accordingly we oppose all government interference with private property, such as confiscation, nationalization, and eminent domain, and support the prohibition of robbery, trespass, fraud and misrepresentation.

Since governments, when instituted, must not violate individual rights, we oppose all interference by government in the areas of voluntary and contractual relations among individuals. People should not be forced to sacrifice their lives and property for the benefit of others. They should be left free by government to deal with one another as free traders; and the resultant economic system, the only one compatible with the protection of individual rights, is the free market [and in a free market, there are no corporations; corporations are creations of the State].

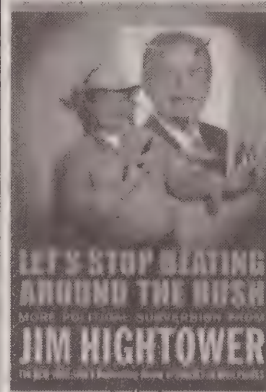
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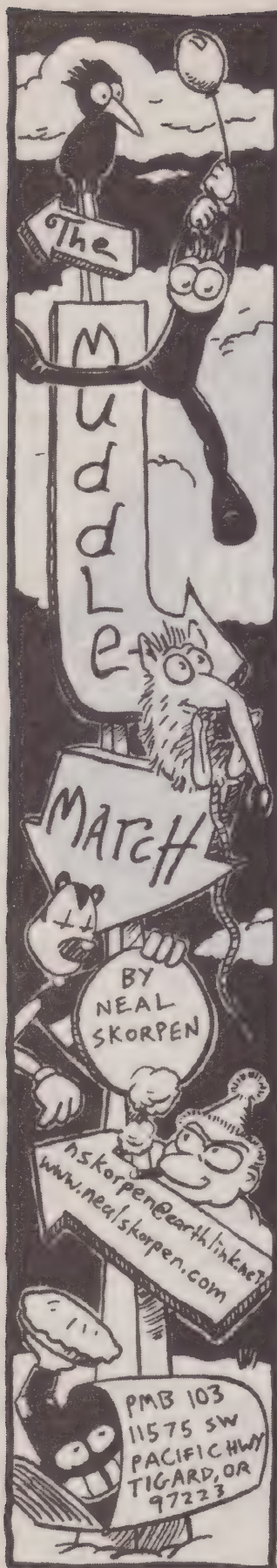
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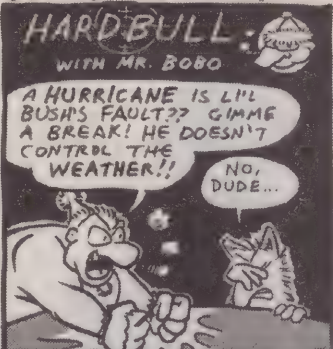


MUDDLEMATCH

BY NEAL SKORPEN

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THEY'VE GONE INTO DEFICIT TO CUT TAXES AND START A WAR, AND NOW WE HAVE NO RESOURCES. THEY'RE IN BED WITH THE OIL INDUSTRY, YET WE'RE GETTING GOUGED ON GAS PRICES.



THE CRISIS JUST THROWS A SPOTLIGHT ON EVERYTHING THAT'S WRONG WITH THIS ADMINISTRATION. FOR EXAMPLE, PUTTING A USELESS CRONY IN CHARGE OF F.E.M.A.



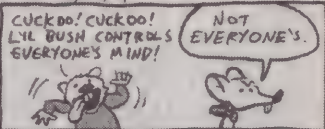
BUT MOSTLY, THEIR CALLOUS DISREGARD FOR HUMAN SUFFERING IS MADE MORE APPARENT EVERY DAY.



NOT TO MENTION THE WHOLE ORWELLIAN DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY, WHICH HAS ONLY MADE US LESS SECURE.



CUCKOO! CUCKOO! LIL BUSH CONTROLS THE WEATHER!!



MUDDLEMATCH

BY NEAL SKORPEN

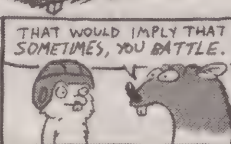
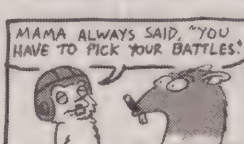
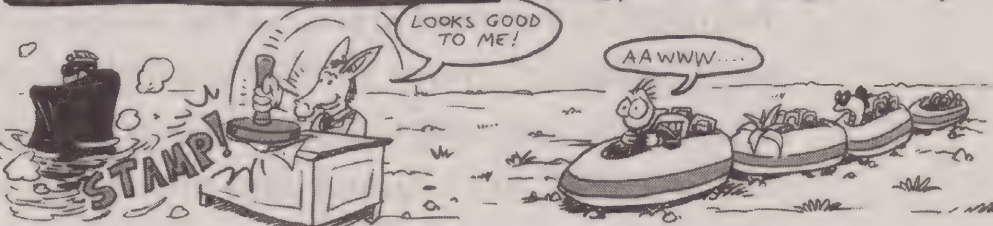
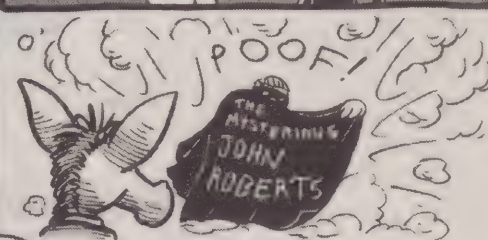
SO! LIL BUSH THINKS HE CAN PUSH US DONKEYS AROUND, DOES HE?



WE'LL JUST ROLL OVER AND RUBBER STAMP WHATEVER JUDGE HE NOMINATES! IS THAT WHAT HE THINKS?!



WELL, HE IS IN FOR THE FIGHT OF HIS LIFE! BUCKLE UP, SONNY BOY! THIS WILL BE ONE HELL OF A ROLLER COASTER RIDE!!





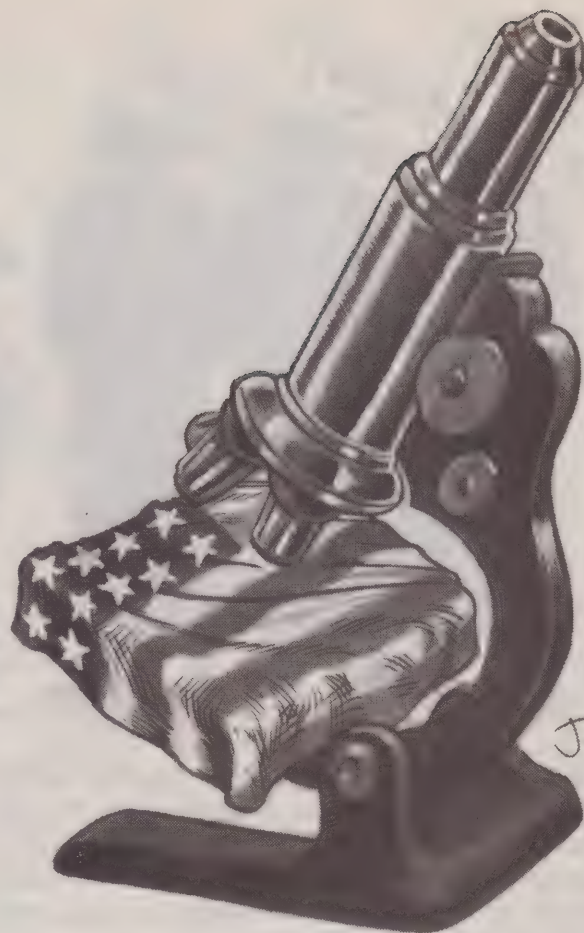
I RECENTLY LEARNED THAT I HAVE MY OWN FBI FILE. You might be surprised to find out that your activities are being monitored, as well, whether you feel they deserve to be or not. And, with Congress restoring nearly all of the PATRIOT Act's sun-setting provisions to their scorching, oppressive noon day glory, the time has come to ask ourselves—has freedom finally fallen to the fatalistic tandem of fear and security?

People like U.S. District Attorney of Massachusetts Michael J. Sullivan don't think so. Earlier this year, Sullivan argued that the "reauthorization of the USA PATRIOT Act will maintain the proper balance between guarding our civil liberties and protecting our homeland from those who seek to harm us" ("PATRIOT Act has not hurt civil liberties," *The Standard-Times*, May 25, 2005). And Attorney General Alberto Gonzales echoed the Bush administration, proclaiming that the PATRIOT Act is necessary to "protect our country against another terrorist attack." ("Gonzales defends USA PATRIOT Act," *The Advocate*, August 8, 2005). Others dismiss the ACLU's claim that the FBI has made a habit of targeting groups and individuals because of their liberal brand of politics ("Documents Obtained by ACLU Expose FBI and Police Targeting of Political Groups," ACLU press release, May 18, 2005). Meanwhile, Bush supporters frequently complain that liberals are simply blowing things out of proportion and that the occasional intrusive measure is necessary in order to win the war on terrorism. I, however, fear the worst; that the brilliant blues of American pride are fading into the dull bruises of a nation that has lost its constitutional soul.

As an activist, I experienced, first-hand, the gross abuses such optimistic and faithful voices are deaf to. On January 20, 2005 I joined about three dozen peaceful demonstrators in taking to the streets of Melbourne, Florida, to mourn the reelection of President Bush. In a funeral-style procession, we walked down one of the city's central thoroughfares brandishing anti-Bush posters, a nine-foot banner that read, "not a mandate," and hand-crafted styrofoam headstones, commemorating the liberties eroding under the Bush administration.

The plan was to march from a nearby park to the local city hall. There we would break the headstones and refuse to bury our rights. But by the time we had arrived at city hall, about 45 minutes into the event, it was clear our rights had already been buried. Our group of about 36 protestors, including four children, a woman in a wheelchair, and at least four people over the age of 60, was met by nine city police officers. Worst of all, one police officer, a member of the crime scene investigation unit, was stationed across the street where he filmed the entire protest.

After the event, the Brevard County chapter of the ACLU obtained records about the police presence at the event. It turned out that former Melbourne police chief Keith Chandler had enacted a policy that made videotaping of anti-administration demonstrations a routine procedure. Chandler did so following the issuance of an FBI memo, in October 2003, which instructed law enforcement in the ways of monitoring legal protests. With the aid of an apologetic city of Melbourne police chief Don Carey, whose organization unintentionally recorded a suspicious SUV that turned out to be from the Brevard County Sheriff's Office (BCSO) and who implemented new rules to protect the exercise of free speech and discarded the routine videotaping



policy, the ACLU discovered that the BCSO had coordinated intense, covert surveillance of the event.

The initial information released showed that officers, under the direction of Bruce Parker, Director of the Investigative Support Unit for the BCSO, photographed the license plates of demonstrators' parked cars, while others took photos of participants from the aforementioned unmarked SUV. At least one undercover officer infiltrated the demonstration. The sheriff's office even notified security at nearby Patrick Air Force Base about the event.

The BCSO had generated a list of six "persons of interest," a label often used when referring to suspected criminals. The records also showed that the BCSO had obtained the date of birth, social security number and address of each of the six listed persons. In my case, the BCSO directly referred to me as a "suspect," took down my car's VIN number, and had my email address.

In a follow-up records request, the BCSO released more than 500 pages revealing expansive surveillance operations around the entire county. The BCSO had not only spied on our demonstration, but had also conducted similar investigations of more than ten other protests. Beginning back in 2002, the



comments beg the question, if anarchists wouldn't participate in a "pro-America" rally, why is he so convinced they'd participate in racial equality protests, peace demonstrations, and civil rights rallies? After all, what's more American than making use of the First Amendment and peaceably assembling? The answer lies with Sgt. Andrew Walters, the sheriff's spokesman. When asked what the six counter-inauguration participants, labeled "persons of interest," were of interest for, Walters said "Protesting in an anti-government assembly" ("Spying on citizens", *Florida Today*, March 23, 2005). Evidently, in the eyes of the sheriff's office, the only kinds of "pro-government" assemblies are cheerleading rallies praising the policies of the Bush administration.

officers took photos and did background checks on members of the Cape Canaveral Coalition for Racial Justice. They also monitored events organized by the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space, the International Association of Longshoremen, and Patriots for Peace (PFP), which organized several pre-war peace demonstrations. In the case of PFP, a group I helped organize, the BCSO assigned an undercover officer to attend and report on peace rally planning meetings. To top it all off, the records revealed that my activism had somehow earned me an FBI number. (Even an issue of *IMPACT press*, which I had previously written for, was scanned and placed into the file.)

Not surprisingly, all of the groups the BCSO scrutinized were left-leaning organizations. In contrast, records show that BCSO attended only one right-leaning rally, "Rally for America," a support the troops/pro-Iraq war event. Though the event, held in March 2003, was attended by more than 1,000 people, BCSO took no photos and made no lists as it had done at other events. In fact, BCSO was actually present at the behest of the event's organizers who were concerned about potential counter-protestors.

When Bruce Parker attempted to publicly rebuff the accusation that the BCSO targeted liberal organizations, he only succeeded in solidifying his bias: "A pro-America rally does not attract anarchists to participate in the rally, except for those who might come to counter-protest. If they don't show up there, there's nothing to record [license] tags for. We're looking for anarchists that are going to commit violent acts" ("ACLU seeks reforms in county spy policy," *Florida Today*, May 16, 2005). Parker's

In response to a torrent of media attention and fiercely critical newspaper editorials, Bruce Parker defended the surveillance tactics: "Before this last protest, demonstrators didn't even know we were present. We were there to make sure there were no protestors who could potentially be a problem, like a group of anarchists—to know who was there we had to get license tag numbers" ("Records reveal more spying," *Hometown News*, May 13, 2005). Parker said September 11 made such tactics necessary and even alluded to the fact his organization was working with the FBI: "We don't want there to be another September 11 where police agencies didn't do as much as they could do to follow up on leads that were available... If we find anything, we immediately take it to the FBI" ("ACLU seeks reforms in county spy policy," *Florida Today*, May 16, 2005).

Considering the instructions of the once classified 2003 FBI memo, it's pretty clear that the FBI is leading local law enforcement agencies, like the BCSO, down a blurry path where constitutional dissent begins to look like terrorism: "Law enforcement agencies should be alert to possible indicators of protest activity and report any potentially illegal acts to the nearest FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force." The Memo also advises: "Extremist elements may engage in more aggressive tactics that can include... trespassing, the formation of human chains or shields, makeshift barricades... peaceful techniques can create a climate of disorder."

In other words, agencies like the BCSO, likely acting on the FBI's directive to preemptively monitor the activities of lawful activists, are treating dissenters as they would terrorists. Epitomizing this purposeful convolution of the war on terror and

a crackdown on dissent, Sheriff Jack Parker said this, in defending his organization's monitoring of the counter-inauguration rally: "We must both uphold the freedoms provided by the Constitution and at the same time protect the lives of our citizens. This is a delicate balance... Terrorists use anti-government activities to form alliances and recruit persons to perform acts of terrorism. If we did not take a special interest in activities that could attract terrorists, we would not be doing our job."

By equating First Amendment protected demonstrations to "anti-government activities" that attract terrorists, law enforcement leaders like Sheriff Parker prove to be inept defenders of the First Amendment. Blinded by ever-increasing policing powers, men like Bruce Parker can hardly tell the difference between ordinary Americans marching to preserve freedom and democracy in the U.S., and those associated with the Oklahoma City bombing. Responding to criticism over the surveillance of counter-inauguration protesters, Bruce Parker retorted, "We were trying to protect the citizens of the county. We want to make sure there is not another Terry Nichols among the protesters" ("Police had interest in war protestors," *Hometown News*, March 25, 2005).

By June 2005, Sheriff Parker had seemingly changed his tune, announcing that his agency would henceforth only gather intelligence on demonstrators who pose "an identifiable potential for violence." But the ambiguity of this language—what constitutes such "an identifiable potential"?—has satisfied few concerns, and raised new questions. Besides, with the PATRIOT Act fully renewed and back at his side, Guantanamo's the limit.

Though the ominous surveillance of lawful citizens in Brevard County has not yet been linked to the PATRIOT Act directly, Kevin Aplin, Vice-President of the Brevard ACLU, says one thing is certain: "We do know that the [Bush] administration has set a political climate where law enforcement feels emboldened to collect surveillance on First Amendment protected activities, using the war on terrorism as justification. The Sheriff here has said they're looking for terrorists. So they're certainly using the war on terror to justify collecting intelligence on citizens that have broken no laws and are engaging in lawful First Amendment activities."

While many in the community decried such egregious policing, many fully agreed that secret monitoring and otherwise unconventional tactics were necessary in the interest of safety. During a city council meeting on the subject, Melbourne Mayor Harry Goode commented that extreme security measures were sometimes necessary because terrorists want to destroy everything that is America. "This is a whole different United States than the one we grew up in," he said ("Police to stop videotaping protesters," *Florida Today*, February 23, 2005). Many Brevard

County residents writing into the local paper agreed. Bill Logan wrote: "Knowing we are under tight security since 9/11, and also knowing there are terrorist cells within our borders, they don't stop to think why police were filming. It's for their own protection." Anthony Marchione wrote, "There are many legitimate reasons to use various surveillance methods, some of which are not necessarily open to public scrutiny" (Letters to the Editor, *Florida Today*, March 13, 2005).

With fear guiding so many toward faith in security, the U.S. may travel a path not unlike that prophesied by an 80-year-old dystopian novel, *We*. Written by Russian author Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We* tells the story of a society, the One State, that decides the "only means of ridding man of crime is ridding him of freedom." To achieve its utopian society of perfect peace, the One State eradicates individuality, privacy, and freedom; and the citizens exalt the 'Guardians' (secret police), who monitor their every action, for "lovingly protecting" them.

As America flees the open skies of liberty for the patriarchal shelter of authoritarianism, perhaps it's only a matter of time before we turn to the transparent walls of the One State: "At all other times we live behind our transparent walls that seem wove of gleaming air—we are always visible, always washed in light. We have nothing to conceal from one another. Besides, this makes much easier the difficult and noble task of the Guardians. For who knows what might happen otherwise?" ❧

An alternative version of this piece, with additional information on the counter-inauguration protest, will appear in the forthcoming book, The Cost of Freedom, from Howling Dog Press (howlingdogpress.com). The book will highlight the stories of those who have fought the Bush government through their activism.

Jeff Nall is a community activist and freelance writer. He has contributed to publications such as: IMPACT press, the Humanist, Toward Freedom, and Clamor. He lives with his wife and daughter in Brevard County Florida.

Make an IMPACT

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
<http://www.aclu.org>

Space Coast Progressive Alliance
<http://www.spacecoastprogressivealliance.org>

People for the American Way
<http://www.pfaw.org>

Brevard County Sheriff's Office
<http://www.brevardsheriffsoffice.org>

U.S. Homeland Security Department
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/homeland>

MY DOG OR YOUR CHILD?

ETHICAL DILEMMAS AND THE HIERARCHY OF MORAL VALUE

BY DR. STEVEN BEST

ART BY W. RALPH WALTERS



Too often, animal rights advocates (ARAs) are challenged with the hysterical hypothetical of the "burning house dilemma." It runs something like this: If you were caught in a burning house, were running out the door to save your life, and only had time enough to save a dog in one room and a human being in another, which would you choose?

Invariably, the question is asked with the intent to find an inconsistency in the value scheme or commitments of the ARA, such that for all their talk about animal rights or species equality, they would still save the human. Deep down, therefore, the ARA is like everyone else and a speciesist at heart. When faced with the burning house question, you are always damned if you do and damned if you don't. If you answer that you would save the human being, your interlocutor glibly and gleefully derides you as a hypocrite. If you answer you would save the dog, you are vilified as a miscreant and deviant misanthrope with warped values.

A Pseudo-Scandal Rocks the Heartland

I was asked this question recently during a question-and-answer session of a presentation I gave at the University of Iowa. In November 2004, the Animal Liberation Front made a bold raid on laboratories in the Psychology Department. They smashed computers and lab equipment and rescued 401 animals. While the wound was still fresh—with the audience full of security, undercover agents, and members of the Psychology Department, and during Martin Luther King Jr. Week events—I spoke in substantive detail on the comparisons between the 19th century movement to abolish human slavery and the 21st century movement to abolish animal slavery. I extended King's notion of justice and his embrace of civil disobedience to a defense of animal rights, as I pointed out the limitations of any humanist framework, however broad, that does not extend the notion of community, justice, and rights to animals. Using King's idea that "an injustice anywhere is an injustice everywhere," I defended the ALF raid on the hideous laboratories at U.I. as a good and just act.

But despite the *Sturm und Drang* of the occasion, it was my parenthetical response to the burning house question during the Q&A—whereby I said I would save my dog over a human stranger—that made headlines in newspapers and blogs throughout the nation. The insipid student paper, *The Daily Iowan* reported that my "remarks [were] so inflaming that they left his audience gasping and whispering." Brian O'Conner, a retired biologist and vivisector, commented that, "Prof. Best's ethic is the 'Me First' ethic—an ethic which doesn't require him to measure the consequences of his actions against anything other than what gives him personal pleasure. It is the self-indulgence of the egocentric masquerading as a lofty moral principle."

Move over Ward Churchill, you have company. Apparently, in this country, you just don't favor the life of a nonhuman animal over a human animal in *any* circumstance unless you want to be strung up in the same gallery with sexual deviants, pedophiles, and champions of incest. I recall the phony furor provoked after 9/11 when Karen Davis of United Poultry Concerns said that "It is speciesist to think that this event was a greater tragedy than the killing of several million chickens, which no doubt also occurred on September 11, as it occurs on every working day in the United States." Her just analogy got international media attention and even landed her an interview on the Howard Stern radio show. Similarly, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) caused a sensation with their "Holocaust on Your Plate" exhibit that most judiciously compared the confinement, suffering, and death of millions of Jews in Nazi concentration camps with billions of animals (10 billion every year in the U.S. alone) in human concentration camps-a.k.a. factory farms. I was stunned that so many people were scandalized by my incidental remarks, especially since the substance of my talk was infinitely more radical and provocative.

From my causal conversations and unscientific polls taken with friends, students, and various audiences, I have found that even people who don't support animal rights would save their own dog or cat over a human stranger in a burning house situation.

Clearly, to answer the burning house question at all, *we have to break it down in order to specify concretely and in various situations*: Just who is the dog and who is the human between whom we have to choose? The burning house question cannot be answered in the abstract; one's answer to it will—or at least should—vary according to the specific being occupying the abstract placeholders of "dog" and "human being." I say *should* vary, knowing that the speciesist will, no matter what, favor the human over the dog.

A "speciesist" is someone who *a priori* (literally, "before experience") prejudicially favors the interests of human over nonhuman animals, such that humans always count more *by sheer virtue of their species membership as Homo sapiens*. In a circular and question-begging manner, speciesists in effect argue that humans count more because they are humans and animals count less because they are animals. From their prejudicial standpoint, they fail to ask and answer the real question of why a being's *species membership* is valorized over its *existential nature*. The wrongness of inflicting pain on a living being does not depend on the species to which it belongs, but rather turns on its nature as an individual sentient life. As Peter Singer observes, "To give preference to the life of a being simply because that being is a member of our species would put us in the same position as racists who give preference to those who are members of their own race."

So then, as I briefly did at University of Iowa, let me answer the burning house question properly, not in the abstract, but *in various concrete ways*.

C'mon Fido, Let's Go!

Scenario #1: As I am running from the burning house for my very life, hurtling down the stairs toward the front door, hearing the bark of a dog in the room to my left and a human cry from the room to my right, as the ceiling falls around me, smoke gathers in choking clouds, and I realize I can only save one life, what should I do? If the dog is my dog and the human is a total stranger to me, I will in every case save my dog. To me, this is obvious, axiomatic, *de rigueur*, and uncontroversial, something that even most speciesists and certainly "animal lovers" would do. But apparently for many it is shocking, irresponsible, horrifying, and scandalous. I will save my dog and not the human because the dog is *family*, an intimate member of my most inner circle of relations, whereas the human is a complete stranger.

My choice is neither arbitrary nor wrong—and I haven't even begun to get controversial. Anyone forced to choose between their

father, mother, brother, sister, or friend and a stranger would naturally and rightly choose to save their own family member. Using similar reasoning, I might choose a member of my local community over someone who lived in Australia. If a person can only save *one* life, it is natural and intuitive to choose—understanding this still is only a very general principle, which might change under different conditions—someone who is relatively “near” over someone relatively “far.” I shall call this the *existential proximity* principle.

All in the Family

Now:

- (1) If the existential proximity principle generally holds; and
- (2) People frequently relate to their dogs, cats, and other “domestic” animals as *family members*; then
- (3) It follows that it is perfectly acceptable and natural to save one’s own dog (or cat, rabbit, etc.) over a stranger

To argue on behalf of saving the human stranger over the canine family member is speciesist and arbitrary. It privileges one being over another simply due to its species membership without explaining the absolute relevance of that criterion. There are two flaws in this approach: (1) it offers no argument why species is the decisive moral criterion for decision making in such dilemmas, and (2) it fails to see that socio-familial proximity legitimately trumps the species criterion, and that we

rightly consider our beloved dogs and cats (as well as other animals) to be cherished members of our families. Indeed, people often are closer to their animals than to their family members. They often spend more time with their animal family and—unlike their human family—even share their beds with them.

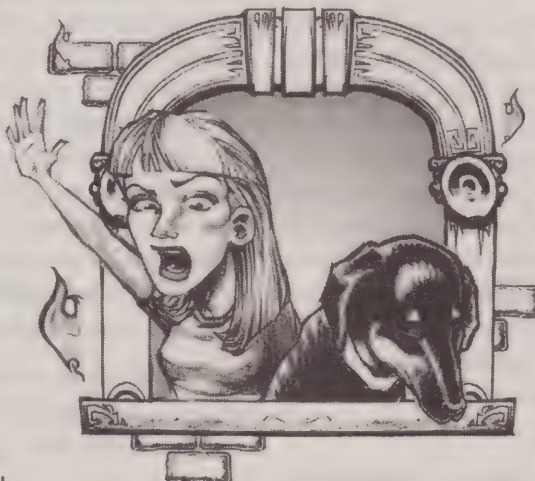
To be frank, I would save my own dog over 1, 10, oh, I don’t know how many human strangers, especially if they were vile animal abusers—more on that below. Let the speciesists bitch and bray, reader; just be glad that you are not their dog or cat, for they would sell you out to a lousy biped in a heartbeat. I do suspect, however, that many of these facile humanists and speciesists are hypocrites who in fact would save their own dog over a human stranger despite their prejudices against other animals (such as the thousands of land and sea animals who end up in the ghastly graveyard of their stomachs) and their irrational allegiance to a species as demented, troubled, and undeserving as *Homo sapiens*.

I think that if the choice were between one’s own *child* and 100 strangers, many or most would choose to save their own child. So what do you think, Herr O’Conner? Is that “self-indulgence” and “egocentric” behavior, too? Do you want me to believe you would sacrifice your son or daughter for a stranger, one who may well be an unpleasant person or, good heavens, an ARA? What’s the big deal if the “child” is one’s dog? *Family is family*—it doesn’t matter if the family member has four legs or two, a furry coat or naked skin, drinks from a bowl instead of a glass, or does its business outside rather than inside.

Mom, Dad, Sis, Oh My!

Scenario #2: The situation may change, however, if one were forced to choose between human and nonhuman family members, such as the dog or the father, brother, or son. Most—but not all—would probably choose the mom or brother over their dog, even if they would always choose their dog over a human stranger.

Scenario #3: But now what if one had to choose between two human family members. Would you save your mother or father, brother or sister, son or daughter, father or son, mother or sister? Who would you choose and *why*?



Utilitarianism and the Quality of Life

Let’s change the scenario a bit to make it more interesting and reveal more about the nature of moral value and ethical considerations.

Scenario #4: Let us suppose this time that the dog is a healthy young puppy I have never met, and the human is my elderly (85 years old) next door neighbor in the last stages of cancer. Who should I help? Once again, I am going to save the dog. My reasoning has nothing to do with species, but rather with utilitarian considerations and the viability of life. The puppy I don’t know has a full and rich life ahead of it, but the human I know has his life in the past and is soon to die. Suppose the human in the room to the right is Terri Schaivo who has lost all significant brain activity and is kept alive only through a feeding tube. This is, no pun intended, a no-brainer: I am leaving the house with the dog in my arms, even if the dog is 20 years old and has no more than a month to live. There is still more quality of life to be found in Fido than in Terri. If the roles are reversed, however, and the dog is sick and dying and the human is young and healthy, I would save the human. But my choice would be made again on quality of life considerations (however quickly or

intuitively I could grasp these in the heat of the moment) not species membership.

This is an appeal to utilitarianism, a philosophical doctrine that defines the right action as that which promotes the greatest amount of pleasure or happiness for the greatest amount of (sentient) beings, human or animal. I freely admit that the two principles I have so far evoked—existential proximity and utilitarianism—can easily contradict one another. My desire to save my own dog over 100 humans on the grounds that s/he is a family member, for instance, clearly does not maximize the total amount of pleasure or happiness for all beings involved in my decision. I am happy, but 100 people are dead and their friends and family members are forlorn and disconsolate. If the stranger I sacrificed to the flames were a genius who had the solution to world hunger or species extinction, then on utilitarian criteria I clearly should save him or her over my dog. I can easily justify saving my dog over a non-descript Joe or Josephine Schmo, but there is a certain point where existential proximity choices will be hard to defend over utilitarian considerations and will indeed be selfish.

Personhood

There is a third ethical perspective I think is extremely important to think through the burning house dilemma, involving the concept of *personhood*. Here I draw from Peter Singer's notion of "person," as well as Tom Regan's related concept of "subject of a life." Although Singer and Regan work from incompatible theoretical frameworks (Singer's utilitarianism vs. Regan's deontological rights approach which focuses on the intrinsic value of living beings and not the consequences of an action), both reject the speciesist *a priori* privileging of humans over animals, while allowing for cases where the value of human life will outweigh that of animals.

For both Singer and Regan, the ethically relevant question is not whether one is a human or nonhuman, but rather whether one is a "person" or "subject of a life." To count as either, one first has to be sentient, that is, capable of experiencing pleasure and pain. To be sentient is to have profound interests in avoiding pain and experiencing pleasure. Lacking brains and nervous systems, rocks and trees cannot count as beings with rights, intrinsic value, and moral significance, unlike sentient human and nonhuman animals. In addition, to count as a person or subject of a life, a being must possess more "advanced" mental and psychological qualities such as self awareness, memory, desires, preferences, an emotional life, and understanding of the future. For Singer, oysters and clams probably do not meet

these criteria and fall into a moral grey zone, such that, unlike with cows and pigs, one might legitimately consume them as food. To the dismay of Karen Davis who has carefully studied the complex intelligence of chickens and turkeys, Singer suggested that such birds may not count as persons. For Davis, however, they are persons in every sense of his term.

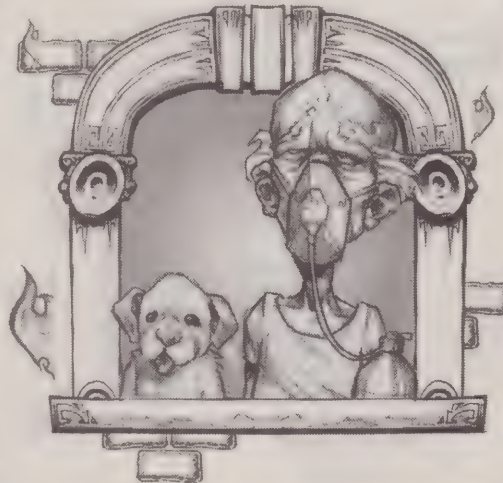
Once we make something like personhood the relevant factor to decide questions of ethics and moral worth and abandon speciesist appeals to *Homo sapiens*, the whole game changes because the rules are now radically different. For when we shift the center of gravity from humans to persons, there will be many cases where nonhumans (such as cats, dogs, dolphins, and chimpanzees) are persons and, conversely, humans (such as infants, the severely brain-impaired, the comatose, and those suffering advanced stages of Alzheimer's) are non-persons.

In situations where there is greater mental complexity in nonhuman persons, Singer favors the life of animals. Following the logic of his argument, Singer says that it would be more ethical to use human nonpersons such as Terri Schaivo for "scientific research" and experiments than nonhuman persons such as a cat, dog, or chimpanzee. But given a choice between an animal and a "normal functioning" adult human being, Singer favors the human being over the animal due to the human's more advanced cognitive qualities.

Singer points out that if we appeal only to language and reason to deny animals rights, then *on the same grounds* we must *also* deny rights to large categories of human beings.

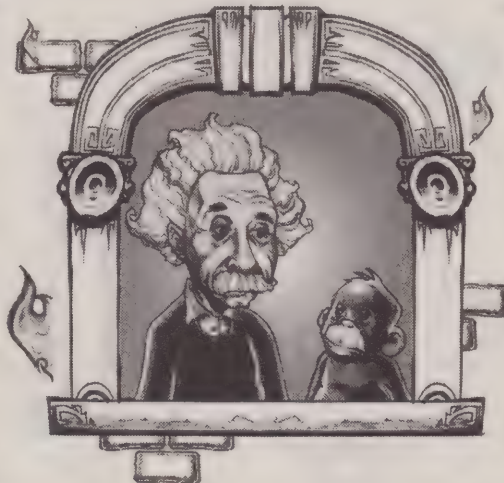
Fetuses, infants, comatose patients, some elderly people, and the severely retarded have no complex form of consciousness and so have no claim to rights. As a chimpanzee is smarter than a three or four year old child, and surely has a lot more awareness going on than a "cognitively impaired" human, why not leave chimpanzees alone and instead confine human infants in cages and try to induce the AIDS virus into their bodies? From a non-speciesist ethical perspective, it is the right thing to do. And surely from a scientific perspective it would be far more valid as there is no longer the problem of extrapolating data from one species to another. If we reject the validity of experimenting on infants, the comatose, Alzheimer's patients, and other classes of cognitively undeveloped or impaired humans, then logically we must also renounce the right to experiment on animals.

On Singer's view, there is a *moral premium* on self-awareness and mental complexity to which one can appeal to weigh different values if necessary. For Singer, "it is not arbitrary to hold that the



life of a self-aware being, capable of abstract thought, of planning for the future, of complex acts of communication, and so on, is more valuable than the life of a being without these capacities." It is worse to cut short the life of a human than a fish, there is less suffering and loss because the fish has a shorter life and less mental complexity. If we apply the criterion of personhood to a highly artificial coerced choice scenario, I would choose my dog over my brain dead mother, a dolphin over a cat, and a chimpanzee over a dog.

Like Singer, Regan also privileges mental complexity and will favor humans over animals in burning house or sinking lifeboat scenarios. In fact, Regan takes this position to absurd extremes, whereby he claims he would throw a million dogs overboard in a sinking boat to save four human lives. In comparison to dogs and other animals, he argues, humans have a far greater "number and variety of opportunities for satisfaction," and thus Regan's "rights view" favors a tiny tribe of humans over a vast nation of dogs. Regan makes this argument with no knowledge of the satisfactions available to a dog, and given the stressful and competitive nature of contemporary life, I suspect a well-treated domestic dog has far more satisfaction in life than his or her human guardian. One might well ask: Is not a happy dog preferable to a miserable human being whose consumer lifestyle is a burden on the planet? Regan's unjustified fidelity to human life shows that at some level utility is a legitimate criterion of appeal. At what point—ten, one hundred, one thousand—I'm not sure, but I feel that there is more value in the lives of a million dogs than any one person. Personally, I'd jump from the boat and drown to save a million dogs from death.



Throw Down Your Straw Men

Animal rights critics take note. It is a crude caricature of animal rights philosophy to claim that ARAs think there is no difference between human and nonhuman animals. To all appearances, *Homo sapiens* is the most creative and intelligent being on the planet; unlike nonhuman animals, human beings can write poetry, compose sonatas, and design spaceships. If there is a *true ethical dilemma*, such that one has to make a choice between a viable human life and an animal, philosophers such as Singer and Regan always privilege human existence, and, in contradistinction to Regan's abolitionist and anti-vivisectionist views, Singer will embrace experimentation on animals any time there is potential to favor human interests.

Given their allegiance to animal liberation and animal rights,

however, they emphasize that there are *few bona fide cases* where human and animal interests might conflict, such that the pleasure and lives of animals can rightly be sacrificed to that of humans. Exploiting animals for their fur, meat, bodily fluids, and entertainment value are not examples of such cases as there is no need or compelling reason to exploit animal lives for human interests. The pleasures human derive from eating meat, for example, are trivial satisfactions that in no way justify the confinement, suffering, torture, and violent death of billions of animals.

My point here is to show that the welfarist Singer and the animal rights proponent Regan are examples of how philosophers and others do *not* conflate differences between human and nonhuman animals. When Ingrid Newkirk says that "a rat is a dog is a boy," she is not collapsing all differences among them; rather, she is emphasizing that all equally are sentient mammals who share the capacities for pleasure and pain, for enjoyable and horrible lives. For Singer, "equality of interests" means that

both humans and animals have interests equally, have concerns, needs, and preferences. Once that is acknowledged, Singer will evaluate the specific nature of humans and animals who are parties in a potential moral dilemma, and decide according to the substance of the human claim over animals and the competing degrees of personhood. For Regan, humans and animals are equal in that they are sentient subjects of a life who have intrinsic value and rights; only in the most extraordinary situation—not vivisection, but a sinking life boat—does Regan allow human interests to

trump animal interests.

The question is not are there differences between humans and animals; clearly there are. The question is: Are these differences morally significant? When, if ever, does the mere fact of human intellectual complexity justify using animals for our alleged benefits and selfish whims? And when do human and animal interests really clash in such a way that (1) human beings have a *substantive interest* at stake, where (2) the only possible way to realize it is to cause suffering and/or death to animals?

The Gestalt Shift Whose Time Has Come: The Biocentric Perspective

Scenario #5: Never mind how they got there, suppose there was a baby harp seal in one room, and a sealer in the other. Not only would I save the seal from the barbarian who makes his living clubbing such beautiful pups over the head and skinning

them alive, I would save the seal over a billion bastards like him. Similarly, I would send an infinite number of Ted Nugent cretins over a steep cliff to save a deer, elk, bear, or any other animal they kill for pleasure. I'd do it to save a cockroach, a flea, or a tick. Or a blade of grass. The planet is a better place without sadists who kill animals for pleasure or profit.

Scenario #6: I would also choose a member of an endangered species (such as a Florida Panther, Black Rhino, or silverback Gorilla) over any human stranger(s), unless, again, this person was so important to the planet s/he could do dramatic things to help it. For anyone quick to uncover more evidence of "egocentric masquerading" here, I would gladly give my own life to save an endangered species.

I adopt an earth-centered perspective (biocentrism) over a human-centered perspective (anthropocentrism), such that I view the needs of the earth and biodiversity to be more important than the life of any single human being, myself included. It is extremely rare for a member of *Homo sapiens* to value the needs of the earth above all else, but one can find biocentric values in deep ecology, Earth First!, and eco-warriors like Paul Watson.

I once heard someone say that they would exterminate every last remaining chimpanzee on the planet in order to save a single human being from AIDS. This is the height of moral perversity and betrays the insane logic of anthropocentrism that grossly overstates the value of an individual human life in the big picture of evolution and biodiversity.

The shift to a biocentric perspective should be humbling for most humans. From the point of view of the earth—of Gaia—the earthworm, butterfly, honeybee, and dung beetle are far more important to its needs and future than the bloated population of over six billion human beings. For whereas earthworms enrich the soil, butterflies and honey bees pollinate the flowers, and dung beetles spread nutrients throughout the rain forest, *Homo sapiens* attack the body of the earth like a deadly virus or cancer.

Eco-humanist Murray Bookchin thinks that the planet would be devoid of interest without human beings. I, on the other hand, believe that the planet would have been far better off had not a hominid species named *Homo* evolved into the violent and destructive locust that it is, a species fattened on war, genocide, environmental decimation, annihilation of animals, and out-of-control economies, population growth, and lifestyles.

Humans have a right to live on the planet just like any other animal. But unless humans—and of course I am principally referring to those living in advanced Northern economies, but also increasingly the rapidly modernizing populations of China

and India—can get their act together and learn to reduce their numbers, simplify their lifestyles, and harmonize their existence with the needs of the planet, I would not shed too many tears for their demise—which will come sooner or later, at once or with painful protraction, ending with a bang or a whimper.

I would rather that elephants again freely roam the African savannas, that chimpanzees fill the forests with playful hoots, that rainforests once again swell majestically, that the rivers and oceans become cleansed and teem with dolphins, whales, and fish. I would rather the regeneration of the earth transpire than have humans continue to devour and destroy the planet with their SUVs, superhighways, urban sprawl, cookie-cutter suburbs, bloated families, fast food addictions, Supersize Me appetites, arrogance and alienation, and grotesque fat asses.

Ponder Thy Plate

I have conflicting thoughts about the burning house dilemma. On one hand, it is a helpful device to clarify ethical values. Species membership may be relevant to moral dilemmas, but not in an *a priori* way that always favors human animals over nonhuman animals. Other factors are more decisive to moral choices, such as existential proximity and personhood.

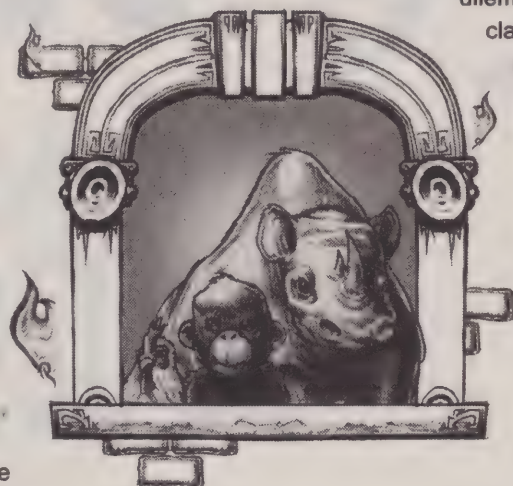
On the other hand, I think the burning house scenario is an empty, sterile, and hypothetical question that is completely useless and raised disingenuously by vapid fools who do nothing to help the planet, but carp on those who do. Its academic nature distracts from the all-too-real and concrete issues every person faces

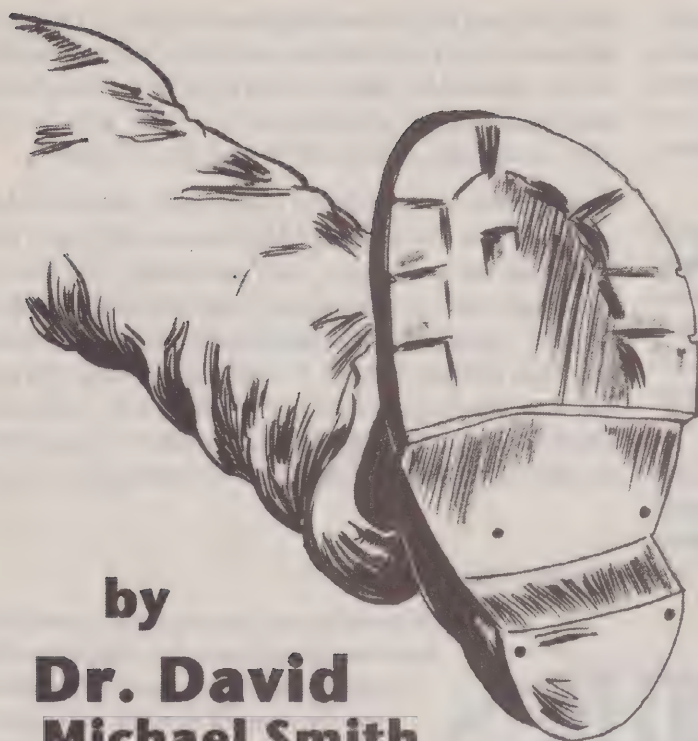
concerning how to live a life that does not cause harm to animals and the earth.

The real issues people have to face are not what will they do when they find themselves in a burning house with choices to make and lives to save, but what type of clothing do they put on their back, what kind of food do they put on their plate, what type of products do they use, and what kind of transportation do they choose.

When asked the burning house question again in the future, I think I will simply reply, "When I am in a burning house and have to choose between an animal and a human, I will let you know what I do. In the meantime, I have some serious ethical choices to make every day." ❧

Dr. Steven Best's book, co-edited with Anthony J. Nocella, Terrorists or Freedom Fighters: Reflections on the Liberation of Animals is available from Lantern Books (lanternbooks.com). It features leading activists and writers like Paul Watson, Rod Coronado, Kevin Jones, and Ingrid Newkirk.





by
**Dr. David
Michael Smith**

**Art by
Rafael Avila**



Is Socialism Really **DEAD?**

WORKING PEOPLE'S STRUGGLES TO OVERTHROW CAPITALISM have profoundly shaped the contours of the 20th century. With the support of millions of workers and small farmers, revolutionary Left movements came to power across one-third of the planet. Socialist societies developed public ownership of the major means of production, economic planning, and new workers' governments. For decades, these new societies enjoyed immense popularity among "the wretched of the earth" because they had overthrown the wealthy and powerful. These societies were widely viewed as desirable and achievable first steps on the long journey to a communist society of the future—a society without exploitation, social classes, alienating labor, material want, or political repression.

For decades, many people around the world were deeply impressed with the economic and social advances achieved in the post-capitalist societies. Unfortunately, over time the socialist experience also came to be associated with the horrendous abuses, crimes, and tragedies during the rule of Stalin in the USSR and Mao in the People's Republic of China. And the

deaths of several hundred thousand people in Pol Pot's Cambodia provided a chilling reminder that genocidal maniacs come in all ideological forms. Marxists and revolutionary socialists in power could point to the extraordinarily hostile global environment when explaining their retreat from workers' democracy, revolutionary internationalism, and socialist morality. But they had made their fair share of mistakes, too—and proved incapable of correcting them.

By the late 1980s, it seemed that authoritarianism, repression, bureaucracy, and economic problems had fatally wounded what began as the most ambitious project for human emancipation in recorded history. Fifteen years ago, amid the crumbling of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and China's embrace of capitalist reforms, many observers concluded that socialism was dead. Perhaps the most famous obituary for socialism has been advanced by U.S. State Department analyst-turned-professor Francis Fukuyama. In a famous 1989 article entitled "The End of History?" and in a 1992 book, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Fukuyama went far beyond delivering

an autopsy of the now-defunct Marxist-Leninist regimes. Much more sweepingly, he argued that liberal capitalism is the best possible form of society because it satisfies most people's economic needs and provides for governments based on democracy and individual rights. Fukuyama concluded that liberal capitalism is "the final form of human government," that there can be no viable alternative to capitalism, and that as far as ideological development is concerned, we have reached "The End of History."

Fukuyama's argument has resonated widely in the corridors of Western governments and in the classrooms of Western universities and colleges. For that matter, the notion that some form of capitalism is inevitable has been taken very seriously by political elites throughout the world. Even many people who are distraught about the ills of capitalism and desirous of a more humane and democratic kind of society have come to believe some version of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's famous TINA declaration: There is no alternative. For fifteen years, this has been the new mantra of the U.S. Empire's ruling class, and regrettably over time it has also been intoned by substantial numbers of people who may well benefit from fundamental social change.

Some analysts, who insist that we are witnessing the end of socialism, boast of a hard-nosed realism. But Fukuyama's announcement of "The End of History" and other obituaries for socialism are not realistic at all. They are based instead on denial of the real and intractable problems of capitalism. The global socialist project may have been at a low point during the past 15 years, but scores of millions of people across the planet continue to support the struggle for socialism. The persistence of socialist aspirations and movements on almost every continent and in almost every country makes clear that "The End of History" has hardly arrived. And there is every reason to believe that economic, social, and political trends in the world will provide an objective material and cultural basis for the renewal and revitalization of socialism in the coming decades.

Signally, today most Marxists and revolutionary socialists acknowledge a wide range of mistakes and misdeeds in some of the 20th century socialist states. And most contemporary revolutionaries are genuinely committed to drawing on historical experience and Marxist theory in developing the vision and politics required for the rebirth of socialism. To borrow an analogy from the late socialist economist David Gordon, one might say that the patient has been seriously wounded but, with proper care, can be nursed back to health and emerge even stronger than before ("Socialism: What's Left After the Collapse of the Soviet System?" *Social Research*, Fall 1993). This conclusion derives not from wishful thinking, blind faith, or dogmatism, but instead from a critical analysis of capitalism and the objective historical possibilities for the renewal and revitalization of the socialist project.

Americans who think that socialism is dead apparently do not realize that Marxist groups and individuals continue to be some of the most steadfast activists for peace, progress, and social justice at home and abroad. Marxists and socialists of various

stripes have played leading roles in the impressive U.S. anti-war movement during the past three years. They have been pivotal in the struggles against the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the Free Trade Area of the Americas, the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement, and other issues arising from corporate globalization. They have figured prominently in efforts to improve the imperiled labor unions and promote class struggle unionism. They have worked with people from diverse backgrounds on many different issues: jobs and incomes, housing, health care, education, environment, women's rights, racial equality, the death penalty, the judicial system, police brutality, and much more.

Outside the borders of the U.S., many more people are aware of the persistence of socialist aspirations and movements. In Venezuela, the populist President Hugo Chavez is leading a mass movement to radically democratize and transform society. In Colombia, a popular revolutionary guerrilla army controls vast sections of the countryside while fighting the right-wing government and its paramilitary forces. In Bolivia, Ecuador, and other South American countries, mass movements of workers and peasants are demanding control over their natural resources and opposition to the U.S. and international financial institutions. In Mexico, the Zapatista National Liberation Army and other revolutionary Left groups are mobilizing people for social change.

Thousands of miles away from an increasingly Left-leaning Latin America, various kinds of revolutionary forces contend for power in Asia. Maoist guerrillas are gaining strength in Nepal and the Philippines. Three large Communist parties command considerable public support in India. And in China, as the badly misnamed Communist Party oversees the country's transition to capitalism, resulting mass unemployment and economic catastrophe have led to mounting discontent and calls for a return to socialism. The Ministry of Public Security recorded more than 74,000 protests in 2004, and the growing gap between the wealthy few and the impoverished majority could well spark a second socialist revolution in the coming years ("Violent Protests at Chinese Plant," CNN.com, August 22, 2005).

Meanwhile, an awful joke continues to make the rounds in Russia and Eastern Europe. Q: What is the worst thing about socialism? A: What comes afterward. It cannot be denied that the transition from socialism to capitalism in Russia produced the greatest peacetime social disaster in recorded history. The country was looted by foreign capitalists and their new Russian allies, economic production plunged, wages and social protections for the workers declined, and life expectancy plummeted. As Stephen Gowans observed, "The dismantling of socialism has, in a word, been a catastrophe, a great swindle that has not only delivered none of what it promised, but has wreaked irreparable harm..." ("Hail the Reds!" *What's Left*, October 19, 2004). Small wonder that 80 percent of the Russian population say they regret the breakup of the Soviet Union (Toby Westerman, "Most Russians 'Regret' End of USSR," WorldNetDaily.com, December 21, 2001).

Of course, if the socialist project in the U.S. is to be renewed and revitalized, it will have little to do with the persistence of socialist aspirations and movements abroad. Instead, it will be because of the real economic, social, and political conditions in our country today. As most folks on the Left have understood, people living in the U.S. Empire are not likely to embrace socialism for abstract or academic reasons. Instead, workers and other oppressed people are likely to turn to socialism when they recognize that they have no other choice if they want to survive. During the first few decades after the end of World War II, concessions from the capitalists persuaded part of the working class to set aside radical ideas. Now, at the dawn of the 21st century, those ideas appear more relevant than ever before.

Contrary to Fukuyama's argument, capitalism in the U.S. is *not* satisfying most people's economic needs. The description of our society as affluent has always been misleading, for most of the historically unprecedented wealth created by working people has always been appropriated by the capitalist class. This affluence has been enjoyed primarily by big business owners, bankers, and landlords, though the spoils of exploitation have generally been bountiful enough to endow politicians, corporate lawyers, conservative intellectuals, and other loyal servants of the established order. While the overall conditions of the working class majority improved during the 20th century, relatively little affluence has trickled down to them. Many more live in poverty than the government admits, and even larger numbers live in conditions of hardship or insecurity (Lawrence Mishel, Jared Bernstein, and Sylvia Allegretto, *The State of Working America: 2004-2005*). The proliferation of automobiles, televisions, computers, kitchen appliances, designer clothes, and other consumer goods sometimes blinds analysts to the fact that decent jobs, adequate housing, safe neighborhoods, affordable health care, strong schools, and other vital social goods are in relatively short supply.

Today, for the first time in U.S. history, public opinion polls show that many people believe their children's lives will be more difficult than their own ("Survey Confirms that Americans Are Overworked, Overspent, and Rethinking the American Dream," Center for a New American Dream, August 31, 2004). As pro-corporate globalization intensifies global competition and fuels a relentless "race to the bottom" for workers around the world, Americans increasingly see that the export or "outsourcing" of

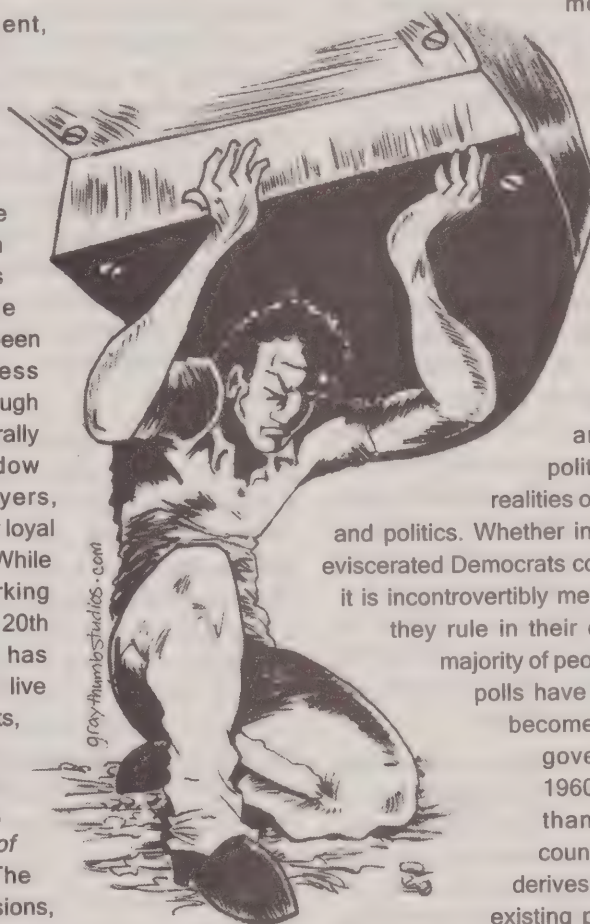
their jobs and the "Walmartization" of the remaining domestic economy are major economic trends of our time.

Coupled with the assault on public services and social programs by conservative politicians, these trends indicate that the so-called American Dream of a secure, comfortable economic future now eludes the majority of people in our country. A recent AFL-CIO opinion poll found that 70 percent of those surveyed say their wages are not keeping up with inflation. About the same portion of respondents say that most new jobs do not provide good pay or benefits ("Fears Rise that U.S. Standard of Living Falling," *Houston Chronicle*, August 30, 2005). Whether we turn to housing or health care or education or retirement, the

future for working class people appears more precarious than it has for generations. The gap between the rich and the rest of us is greater than in any other advanced capitalist country (Michael Yates, "Poverty and Inequality in the Global Economy," *Monthly Review*, February 2004).

Similarly, Fukuyama's depiction of the U.S. as a democratic society with strong protections for individual rights may be standard boilerplate for State Department analysts, government officials, and politicians, but it flies in the face of the realities of contemporary American government and politics. Whether increasingly right-wing Republicans or eviscerated Democrats control the White House and Congress, it is incontrovertibly men of wealth and power who rule. And they rule in their own interest, not the interest of the majority of people. As scholarly research and opinion polls have made clear, much of the public has become alienated from and disgusted with government and politics since the late 1960s. Voter turnout in the U.S. is lower than in any other advanced capitalist country, and a large part of the explanation derives from people's dissatisfaction with both existing political parties and the absence of a genuinely progressive alternative.

As political scientist Michael Parenti has emphasized, what the U.S. really has is an oligarchy or plutocracy, not a real democracy (*Democracy for the Few*, 2001). And the situation is not getting any better. It was U.S. imperialism that led al Qaeda to attack our country on September 11, 2001—and the present illegal, immoral war on Iraq will almost certainly provoke an even greater blow in the not-too-distant future. As the post-9/11 passage of the PATRIOT Act showed, terrorist attacks have become the pretext for limiting and reducing civil liberties at home, and the prospects for the future are grim. In addition, growing economic anxiety, combined with fear of terrorism and worries about the future, already appear to be contributing to an anti-immigrant



hysteria in some parts of the country. A "New McCarthyism" has begun to emerge on some university and college campuses. And well-financed fascists masquerading as Christians have begun to talk openly about the need to turn the U.S. into a theocratic dictatorship.

In addition, contemporary U.S. capitalism is increasingly threatening the natural environment itself. The long forced march of Soviet industrialization and the Soviet role in the arms race produced a great deal of pollution. But it seems hard to dispute that the giant Western capitalists' drive for profits and power has been the major factor in the growing destruction of the planet's air, water, and soil. As the Marxist environmentalist John Bellamy Foster pointed out, "There is an irreversible environmental crisis within global capitalist society. But setting aside capitalism, a sustainable relation to the earth is not beyond reach. To get there, we have to change our social relations" ("Capitalism's Environmental Crisis—Is Technology the Answer?" *Monthly Review*, December 2000).

This imperative may appear so demanding as to be impossible. But the alternative is even more foreboding. As the linguist and foreign policy critic Noam Chomsky pointed out, "The survival of the human species is by no means an obvious thing: there are very severe threats to survival and we learn about them all the time. The threat of environmental destruction is much too real to put to the side. The threat of destruction by the weapons of mass destruction—that has come very close many times..." (*Hegemony or Survival*, 2004).

If the imperative of planetary survival—and the mounting economic, social, and political problems of capitalism—leads back to the question of radical social change, can working people figure out how to bring about a new and improved kind of socialism? Millions of people around the world believe that this question can be answered affirmatively, and this writer believes so, too. The theory and praxis required for a humane and democratic socialism in the 21st century deserve a great deal of discussion and debate. But at least one fundamental principle can be briefly identified here.

Perhaps the most important lesson to be drawn from the historical experience of Marxist-Leninist regimes is that genuine workers' democracy is absolutely essential for the long-term triumph of global socialism. The writings of Marx and Engels, and the bulk of Lenin's work, too, makes clear that one vital feature of socialism is the exercise of power in all domains of life by the working class majority. However, the dire conditions in which the Soviet and Chinese revolutions occurred led to the graduate substitution of the party-state bureaucracy for the working class majority. The eventual concentration of power in the hands of a few "leading comrades" not only precluded the development of real workers' power but also contributed to many economic and social problems.

The reduction of socialist democracy to "the leading and guiding role of the party" had other grave consequences as well. The original association of socialism with individual freedom, the self-determination of nations, and a truly human morality was

violated in some horrendous ways. And as these ideals were sacrificed in the name of *realpolitik*, the emancipatory vision which inspired generations of Marxists and revolutionary socialists often degenerated into vulgar power politics and the crude calculus of cadres, troops, and counter-revolutionaries. Any revolutionary-minded person who still thinks that workers' democracy is an impractical, dispensable ideal should reflect on the bitter historical irony that it was the party-state leaders in the USSR and China who chose to inaugurate capitalist restoration instead of the democratization of socialism.

Workers' democracy and authentic socialism would rest on collective public ownership and control of the major means of production, democratic economic planning, and general supervision of economic and social life by the workers themselves. Workers' self-management in industries, shops, and other workplaces would be conjoined with democratically adopted frameworks of laws and norms for the community, region, and country. Democratically organized workers' councils would flourish at every level and in every sector of the economy. Private ownership of major economic enterprises, capitalist owners, and bosses would become a thing of the past.

Workers' democracy and authentic socialism would also rest on a new kind of government constituted and led by working people and committed to the emancipation of working people. Radically expanded direct participation in decision-making would be developed in workplaces, communities, and other domains of social life. Radically democratized delegation and representation would be a vital feature of governance at regional and national levels. Marx was right to praise the heroic Paris Commune of 1871 for paying elected delegates no more than the average workers' wages and for allowing the recall of delegates by workers at any point. These measures could go a long way toward preventing the reemergence of an elite of professional politicians. Workers' democracy would also require a new socialist constitution, new socialist laws, institutionalized protections for individual freedoms and group rights, and special measures to end imperialism, national oppression, racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression.

Even this cursory sketch of socialist democracy invites more questions than it provides answers. And a new historical epoch of working class struggles will inevitably include great obstacles, problems, and dangers for the socialist project. None of these should be minimized. But people who are committed to abolishing class exploitation and the myriad related ills of capitalism have grounds for cautious optimism. The emancipatory promise of socialism rests on an eminently reasonable premise. Socialism has a future because "ordinary people" are capable of working together to create a society in which "the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all" (Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 1848). 144

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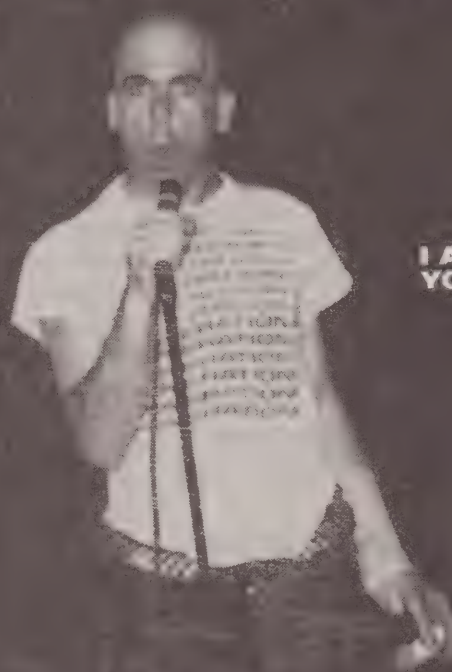
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Peter McLaren & the 3 R's: Reflection, Resistance, Revolution

by Dr. David Gabbard

Art by Charley Deppner

PETER McLAREN'S NAME MAY BE NEW TO MANY READERS of *IMPACT press*. The reasons for this are tragic. For nearly 20 years, McLaren, a professor in the Graduate School of Education at UCLA, has worked at the forefront of an effort to draw attention to the multiple ways in which America's schools are implicated in the corporate-led assault on democracy here at home and the complimentary resurgence of U.S. imperialism abroad.

Throughout his career, he has authored or coauthored more than 25 books, edited or coedited 15 others, authored or coauthored over 100 chapters and more than 150 articles in scholarly journals. Across those writings, he has worked toward developing an alternative vision of schools as "democratic public spheres... dedicated to forms of self- and social empowerment, where students have the opportunity to learn the knowledge and skills necessary to live in an authentic democracy."

This year alone, McLaren has published four new books: *Capitalists and Conquerors: Critical Pedagogy Against Empire*; *Red Seminars: Radical Excursions into Educational Theory, Cultural Politics, and Pedagogy*; *Teaching Against Globalization and the New Imperialism: A Critical Pedagogy* (with Ramin Farahmandpur); and *Critical Theories, Radical Pedagogies and Global Conflicts* (with Gustavo Fischman and Heinz Sunker and Colin Lankshear). Many of his previous works have received numerous awards and honors. In 2004, an international panel of experts organized by The Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences, a Russian-British University, named his book *Life in Schools* one of the 12 most significant education books ever written. In that same year, he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Lapland in Finland, and, most notably, a group of scholars in northern Mexico established an institute in his name—La Fundacion McLaren de Pedagogia Critica (The McLaren Foundation for Critical Pedagogy).

Still, his name goes largely unrecognized among those affiliated with the political left in the United States. The situation might be different if it were not for the left's failure to mobilize any significant movement in recognition of the central importance that public education holds for the great historic struggle for

democracy. For many reasons beyond its control, the political left in the United States has always been fragmented and reactionary. It simply lacks the resources to create and sustain the organizational structures necessary to compete with corporate-financed structures developed by the right to inhibit the advancement of democracy. In contrast, since the populist movements of the 1960s that witnessed the potential of democratic movements to impact public institutions by harnessing the power of the state to serve public interests, the corporate sector of private wealth and privilege has subsidized the formation of a vast network of foundations, institutes, and think-tanks through which to bludgeon the mass-mind of government into complicity with their campaign of class warfare. The tight connections between these structures and the corporate-media have also given rise to such rightwing media celebrities as Rush Limbaugh, Ann Coulter, Bill O'Reilly and others. That same network also has very close ties to televangelists like Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell—again using the media to generate religious fervor in support of their neoliberal economic and neoconservative political agendas. Those connections, of course, were most crudely revealed to us by Reverend Pat Robertson's recent call for the assassination of Hugo Chavez in which he expressed overt support for state terrorism in the name of U.S. imperialism.

Those who operate within elite planning circles that now include the likes of Reverend Robertson and other proto-fascists understand perfectly well the importance of maintaining the illusion of democracy. They also understand that combating democratic populism through military or police violence, as in a totalitarian state, would destroy that illusion. Therefore, they have invested heavily in developing these various structures dedicated to what Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky famously labeled "manufacturing consent." In order to maintain the illusion of democracy, they must control what people think, and they have made major inroads over the past 30 years toward turning the entire information system of our society, including our public schools, into one huge propaganda machine.

Against this background, we can best understand their assault

on public education and McLaren's position as a leading figure in the resistance against capital's ruthless campaign against democracy, both domestically as well as globally. For Marx, capital represented more than that class of person who owned the means of production. As further explained below, he also treated it as a relation of totalizing dependency that alienates or dehumanizes labor.

Education Matters

Again, I say it is tragic that Peter McLaren's name goes so unrecognized by those on the left. And it is tragic because I believe they would know his name and his writings were it not for the fact that the left pays so little attention to what is happening to the American education system. As McLaren has written, "[w]e live in dangerous times, a time in which college freshmen think it's 'cool' to agree ideologically with Rush Limbaugh and to be a fan of Bill O'Reilly... To be fascist and singularly untutored in the political economy of ideas has never been in such fashion. Rarely are the political consequences of such allegiances thought through. This is one of the tragedies of contemporary schooling" (*Life in Schools*, 2003). Should members of the left ever come to recognize how their abandonment of education matters condemns them to swim forever upstream against a flood of public opinion manufactured by the forces of capital and the overwhelming dominance they maintain over the nation's prevailing sources of information and ideas, they could not ignore McLaren. His courage to speak and write against capital's anti-democratic dogmas and its mobilization of the security state on behalf of its imperial ambitions brings to mind Princeton professor Cornel West's recent explanation of why "the American democratic experiment is unique in human history." This experiment is unique, as West asserts in his 2004 book *Democracy Matters*,

not because we are God's chosen people to lead the world, nor because we are always a force for good in the world, but because of our refusal to acknowledge the deeply racist and imperial roots of our democratic project. We are exceptional because of our denial of the antidemocratic foundation stones of American democracy. No other democratic nation revels so blatantly in such self-deceptive innocence, such self-

paralyzing reluctance to confront the night-side of its own history. This sentimental flight from history—or adolescent escape from painful truths about ourselves—means that even as we grow old, grow big, and grow powerful, we have yet to grow up.

McLaren's work reminds us that liberating ourselves from these adolescent deceptions will require a widely prevalent and genuinely serious commitment to democracy. His writings have always addressed the importance of tying our educational priorities to that commitment, understanding, as West does in *Democracy Matters* that

[d]emocracy is always a movement of an energized public to make elites responsible—it is at its core and most basic foundation the taking back of one's power in face of the misuse of elite power. In this sense, democracy is more a verb than a noun—it is more a dynamic striving and collective movement than a static order or stationary status quo. Democracy is not just a system of governance, as we tend to think of it, but a cultural way of being. This is where the voices of our great democratic truth tellers come in.

Even within the circles of critical educational theorists, where many of us strive to play our own roles as "democratic truth tellers," few figures epitomize that role as provocatively as McLaren.

Life in Schools or Dead Labor?

Internationally recognized as one of the leading architects of critical pedagogy, McLaren was a close friend and associate of the late Paulo Freire, the Brazilian theorist and activist whose famous book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* helped to reawaken democratic energies around educational issues in North America and the rest of the world beginning in the 1970s. In a recent interview with Michael Shaughnessy, McLaren described Freire's work as being "about establishing the critical relationship between pedagogy and politics, highlighting the political aspects of the pedagogical and drawing attention to the implicit and explicit domain of the pedagogical inscribed in the political." While he could have well described his own work in those same terms, McLaren's recognition of capital as the

For many reasons beyond its control, the political left in the United States has always been fragmented and reactionary. It simply lacks the resources to create and sustain the organizational structures necessary to compete with corporate-financed structures developed by the right to inhibit the advancement of democracy.

overwhelmingly dominant social relation of our times has led him to infuse his writings on critical pedagogy with his own brand of Marxist humanism, which he identifies as the "cornerstone" of his work.

McLaren views capital as a social relation that negates democracy through its denial of our humanity. Capital alienates us from our need to act autonomously and in community with others to create and recreate the world by reducing human beings to dead labor—strapped down and fed into the same system that produces and reproduces the private property that subjugates us in the first place. The aim of McLaren's revolutionary critical pedagogy, therefore, lies not with the abolition of private property, but with the abolition of the alienated labor on which it depends. For critical pedagogy to transcend its own domination under the social relations of capital, it must help those engaged in the pedagogical encounter to transcend their own alienation.

From McLaren's Marxist humanist perspective, state-sponsored compulsory schooling began and continues to function as an effort to normalize the alienation requisite to capitalism. The first step toward alienation begins with the state's demand that children be taken from their organic contexts, family and community, and placed within the institutional confines of the school. This initial step symbolizes, on a physical level, the primary aim of what is called "school discipline"—teaching children to deny their own subjectivities. The second step toward alienation proceeds from the teacher-student relationship. Mirroring the capital relation, the teacher speaks and the students listen. The teacher commands, the students obey. Instruction demands passive memorization of predetermined meanings, established within textbooks produced, controlled, and distributed by corporations. Assessment proceeds from students' regurgitation of those corporatized meanings as they've been assigned to the world by capital, never by the students' themselves. Almost never do those meanings have anything to do with the lives of the children in the world beyond school. Hence, the work demanded of them seems boring and meaningless.

This, however, is where, for McLaren, school functions most effectively to condition children into the capital relation. Students deemed most "successful" students are those who demonstrate the greatest willingness to alienate themselves from their own interests and submit to the capital relation as manifest in the

patterns of school. Regardless of how alienating and stupid these demands of school may be, "successful" students demonstrate the discipline to ignore the curriculum's lack of intrinsic value to their lives. The dangerous "common sense" of schools teaches them that they should want to be "successful," that they should want to achieve what's called "excellence," and that they demonstrate this excellence through the extrinsic value assigned to grades and, more recently, scores on state-mandated, standardized, high-stakes tests. Those students deemed "failures" are those who demonstrate the greatest resistance to the school's pressures to "succeed." This, in McLaren's estimation, represents the perfect system for transforming children into dead labor and conditioning them into the social patterns of the capital relation. Under these traditional patterns, schools prepare students for their future lives as what Marx termed "wage-slaves" by conditioning them to accept their status as "grade slaves."

Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy

One of the central aims of McLaren's revolutionary critical pedagogy entails undermining those elements of schooling that socialize children into the capital relation by disciplining them to accept their status as dead labor. To accomplish this, McLaren calls for a pedagogy that takes "the problems and needs of the students themselves as its starting point." "On the one hand," he writes in *Life in Schools*, "a pedagogy based on student experience encourages us to analyze the dominant forms of knowledge that shape student experiences; on the other hand, it attempts to provide students with the means to analyze their own particular experiences and subordinate knowledge forms." In this sense, revolutionary critical pedagogy does not entail substituting the prevailing reality-distorting curriculum of the current system with a curriculum deemed by its proponents to be less reality-distorting or more "true." Though the curriculum might be more reflective of the reality around them, students would still be required to passively memorize and regurgitate information for the sake of achieving a grade. Teaching for great *ideological correctness*, moreover, leaves the capital relation within schools intact. As a result, students will likely continue to be denied a *voice* with which to be present in the world and through which to become empowered to shape it.

To aid students in finding such a voice, McLaren believes teachers should encourage students to doubt everything as part

McLaren's vision of a critical pedagogy would implore teachers and students to unite as investigators of the forces and conditions that give shape to students' experiences with the hope of reaching critical consciousness of those conditions and how they shape students' subjectivities.

of an effort to identify and interrogate those forms of power and control that operate in their own social lives. He also believes that teachers should help students interrogate the past in search of languages used by previous generations of subjugated groups to *name* their predicaments. "Naming," McLaren writes, "is simply identifying and defining those social and economic relationships that most clearly affect students' lives, particularly the inequitable distribution of power and resources" (*Life in Schools*). In stark contrast to the domesticating energies spent on disciplining students into passive accommodation to the world under the capital relation that dominates traditional patterns of schooling, McLaren's vision of a critical pedagogy would implore teachers and students to unite as investigators of the forces and conditions that give shape to students' experiences with the hope of reaching critical consciousness of those conditions and how they shape students' subjectivities. Armed with this consciousness of their world, students, as active citizens within the historic struggle for democracy, can undertake a humane transformation of that world. On these matters, critical pedagogy does not feign neutrality. To the contrary, critical pedagogy promotes and encourages the idea that "[s]tudents, despite their differences, must become unified in a common struggle to overcome the conditions that perpetuate their own suffering and the suffering of others. Critical pedagogy," as McLaren forcefully argues, "must be undertaken within a language of public life, emancipatory community, and individual and social commitment" (*Life in Schools*).

Where McLaren has parted company with many critical theorists in stipulating the need for a revolutionary critical pedagogy is in his acknowledgement of the obvious: capitalism is simply antithetical to the realization of democracy. Capitalism hinges on the values of heteronomy (obedience to hierarchical authority) and individualism (pursuing individual profit over social need and environmental sustainability), while democracy rests on the values of autonomy and community. The very point of McLaren's embrace of Marxist humanism lies in what psychologist and philosopher Erich Fromm identifies as having

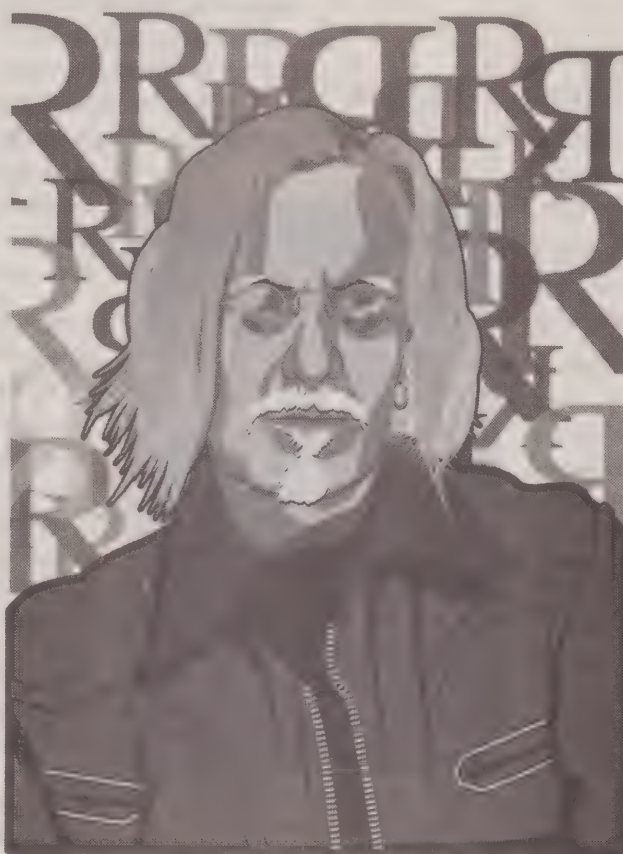
been at the very center of Marx's philosophy: "Marx's aim was that of the spiritual emancipation of man, of his liberation from the chains of economic determination, of restituting him in his human wholeness, of enabling him to find unity and harmony with his fellow man and with Nature" (*Marx's Concept of Man*, 1961). Revolutionary critical pedagogy, for McLaren, works within a socialist imaginary; that is, it operates from an understanding that the basis of education is political and that spaces need to be created where students can imagine a different world outside of capitalism's law of value (i.e., social form of labor), where alternatives to capitalism and capitalist

institutions can be discussed and debated, and where dialogue can occur about why so many revolutions in past history turned into their opposite.

Where McLaren also parts company with many who claim to embrace critical pedagogy is his unflinching commitment to *naming* the capital relation as the social and economic relation that most clearly affects the lives of students and as the ultimate source of the inequitable distribution of power and resources both domestically and internationally. Critics have expressed exasperation with McLaren's tendency to provide example after example after example of the social, political, economic, and environmental injustices committed by the forces dedicated to the protection and expansion of the capital relation—for example,

the meaning of the phrase "security state." "What's this got to do with schools?" they ask. Everything. The fact that most people have no awareness of the conditions or events described in his examples proves his point. This is not to say that I blame them. Not at all. I blame the educational system that presents an antiseptic version of reality that frequently crosses over to an American exceptionalist perspective in which everything is great and wonderful here in God's country, no need for more democracy. And this is also, again, why I say it's so tragic that so few on the left are familiar with the name and work of Peter McLaren. Let's hope that changes soon. ❧

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BOOK REVIEWS

War Made Easy

How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us To Death

By Norman Solomon

John Wiley & Sons (www.wiley.com)

Review by Patrice Jones

"Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me."

So goes the old saying. But when it comes to war, we've been fooled over and over again, with the same tricks serving the same purposes every time.

When does credulity become complicity? That's the question that arises for me after reading Norman Solomon's *War Made Easy*.

People in the United States like to think of themselves as peaceful and friendly lovers of liberty. Despite that innocent and pacific national self-image, the USA always seems to be fighting somebody, often by means of torture and treachery. In my lifetime, the United States has invaded Afghanistan, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Iraq, and Panama; bombed civilians in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Iraq, Kosovo, Lebanon, and Vietnam; and sponsored reactionary paramilitary violence in Afghanistan, Angola, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Nicaragua and heaven-only-knows where else.

How is it that peace-loving people are so frequently inspired to march to war? How do people who see themselves as guardians of liberty come to confuse occupation with liberation? Why do people who claim to deplore political violence so often use violence to solve real or perceived political problems?

There are two possibilities: (1) U.S. citizens repeatedly have been tricked into supporting violence by war-mongering politicians and their sycophants in the media; or (2) U.S. citizens aren't really all that committed to peace and freedom after all.

In *War Made Easy*, Solomon elaborates the first of these hypotheses, examining 17 ways that "presidents and pundits keep spinning us to death." He devotes a rambling chapter to each concept. Some chapters survey the ways that the idea in question has been used to promote different military endeavors while others serve as antidotes by refuting the idea under scrutiny.

Solomon has something interesting to say about each of the 17 concepts, but I found myself wishing for a more focused and comprehensive treatment. In which recent wars have each of the ideas been operative? How have they been deployed and to what effect? How do we know what impact they actually have had on the thinking and behavior of U.S. voters and soldiers?

In contrast to his well-justified cynicism concerning the motivations of politicians, Solomon's attitude toward the credulous public seems almost naive. Concerning covert operations in Central America in the 1980s, Solomon approvingly quotes journalist Robert Parry's opinion that, "If the American people knew that their tax dollars were being used to arm brutal armies which were butchering political dissidents, killing children and raping young girls, then support for the Reagan-Bush policies would have evaporated."

That was a reasonable supposition at the time but the truth has come out since and in no way diminished American adoration of Ronald Reagan. More recently, support for Bush's Iraqi adventure has declined only due to U.S. costs and casualties. Photographs of mutilated Iraqi children and pornographic torture at Abu Ghraib did not reduce public support for "our troops" or their Commander in Chief.

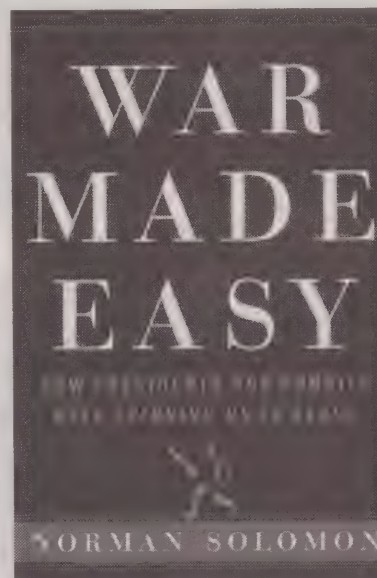
How, then, is Solomon so sure that the public has been tricked? Isn't it possible that U.S. citizens know very well what their government is doing and whole-heartedly approve of the use of violence to secure cheap

gas for their Hummers? Since the foundation of the U.S., haven't white Christians always approved of the violent appropriation of the lands and lives of darker non-Christians?

A related set of questions concerns the media. A journalist himself, Solomon describes but does not explain the complicity of journalists in pro-war propaganda and disinformation campaigns. He shows how, again and again, journalists fall for and then belatedly discover the deceptions of politicians. But aside from a few tantalizing glimpses into the psyches of sycophants like Dan Rather, Solomon does not help us to understand how men and women who see themselves as seekers and speakers of truth are so easily and repeatedly led to participate in deception.

Reflecting on Solomon's 17 pro-war propositions, it seems to

(*WAR*, continued on page 59)



BOOK REVIEWS

America, Wake Up!

Terror Prevention Steps We Must Take Now

By James R. White, Jr. and Anthony S. Petti

American Book Publishing (www.american-book.com)

Review by Robert Allan Williams

Crime and its prevention, coupled with the government's inability to effectively address this issue, have led to a surge in employment within the private security industry. *America, Wake Up!* attempts to document this occurrence, however, this 145-page book is poorly written by two security guards who display no knowledge of what has been written to date in the field of private security. The authors begin their case for state-sanctioned private security without first providing a sufficient, accurate and unbiased exposition; a critical analysis is fair only after that. Their book is poorly-conceived and contains no bibliography.

If readers really seek the truth about the issues in the field of private security, it is important for them to realize that *anyone can say anything*. The authors express their tired positions and weak arguments repeatedly, chapter by chapter, in support of their idea of state-sanctioned para-professional security guards. This book is so badly written that it fails to even give the appearance of good scholarship. Though the authors attempt to provide a smokescreen resulting from craft, their writing abilities fall well short of the mark; there is only authoritarian balderdash without the masquerade of erudition.

Calling their 20 short entries "chapters" is presumptuous and exaggerated. The first 14 chapters have no headings; probably because the 13 chapters that follow the first chapter do little more than echo the first. They are followed by six, specifically named chapters: "Hotels and Motels," "Shopping Malls," "Colleges, Universities, and All Schools," "Hospitals," "Our Homes and Our Communities," and "Elderly Housing."

The first chapter begins the authors' case for a tax-supported para-professional private security crime prevention force, in contrast with the current police force, whose focus is to catch criminals after a crime has been committed. The authors as-

sert, "After you have finished reading our book, you will know which entity should be responsible for crime prevention and anti-terrorist operation. And it's not the public police in whom you continue to think it is." Ominous is the authors contempt for individual liberty and human rights: "In other words, we as human beings can never do away with crime—or even come close to a solution to curtail even a small area of this social disease—not as long as humans are selfish, greedy, wanting their own individual sovereignty, and desire the need to be independent from anything, or anyone, in governmental authority."

Chapter Two deals with hospital security (as does Chapter 18, "Hospitals.") The authors state that, "We can not rely on the outside police forces to prevent crime in these hospital complexes. It will not happen."

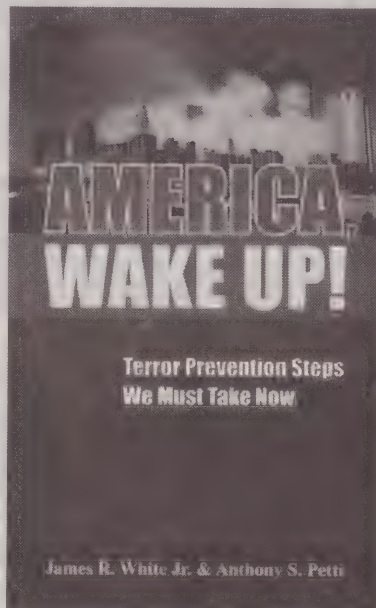
The authors propose a solution that smacks of authoritarianism: "If the hospital can't see this, then the insurance industry should. They could force the hospital to make their security professional, or they could threaten them by refusing to give them operating insurance, and that would put that hospital out of business."

Chapter Six reveals the authors aversion to scholarship: "Crime prevention is a science, and the complicated formula for a successful operation requires two dedicated entities that must function as one... the proactive crime prevention and the reactive crime control agency." But what is the science? Why is the formula complicated? Readers are left in the dark.

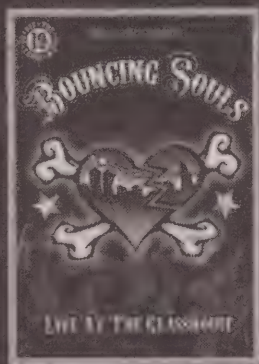
Chapter Eight is concerned about awaking readers to the authors' alleged benefits of state-driven private security. In Chapters Nine and Ten, the authors make their case for a surveillance society implemented by corporatist security saying that "the public police cannot monitor your home twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. However, the private security police can."

The remaining ten chapters continue in the same authoritarian manner, advocating the transition of private security from the hands of individuals to the corporatist hand of the state. In Chapter 20, "Elderly Housing," the authors authoritatively demand: "If a privately owned elderly housing authority cannot afford these security agents to prevent crime, then they should be forced by the local government to comply... If these selfish owners do not comply, their buildings should go up for sale to an owner who

(*AMERICA*, continued on page 59)



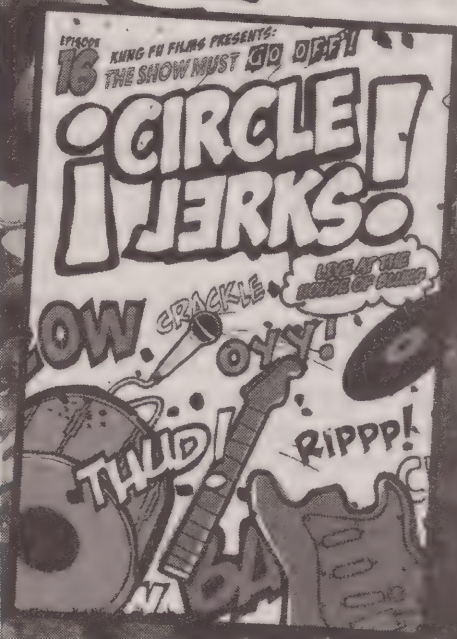
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Walk Like a (Straight) Man

By Adam Finley

The gay community still has a long way to go before it reaches full acceptance, but it has made some significant strides in the last several years. Shows like *Queer Eye* and *Will and Grace* have proven that homosexuals can be accepted by larger society as long as they're non-threatening and reveal their homosexual tendencies in subtle ways. Yes, gay people can be scary, almost terrifying, but not if they help you pick the right kind of drapes to go with your new sofa bed.

So far this has been the only way for anyone to gain acceptance in the world of straight white people. Many white people hated blacks until the advent of professional basketball, after which a plethora of racial terms once used to degrade blacks were all discarded for a kinder, more accepting term: Magic Ball Jesters of the Wood Floor. "You amuse us, and therefore we accept you, Magic Ball Jesters of the Wood Floor!" the masses would chant.

All of this has been good for human relations, and for humankind in general, but just because we've gone this far doesn't mean we should rest on our laurels. Now more than ever the gay community needs to work harder to impress and appease straight people. Here are some tips:

1. Be entertaining. I cannot stress this enough. If, while in the presence of straight people at a restaurant you find that your façade has slipped and your homosexuality is making them uncomfortable, immediately leap onto the table and begin tap dancing. If this isn't enough to distract people from your gayness, ask for a volunteer from the audience and perform an impromptu "sawing in half" trick. This requires you to travel everywhere with a small truck loaded with dance shoes and magic supplies, but it is the sacrifice you must make in order to maintain contentment among your fellow human beings.

2. Never refer to your significant other in a way that suggests the two of you have

any kind of sexual relationship. This frightens straight people, many of whom have been known to scamper into trees when confronted with the unsettling fact that gay people make love to other gay people. For example, this is wrong:

"Hello, my name is Jerrod and this is my partner, Frank."

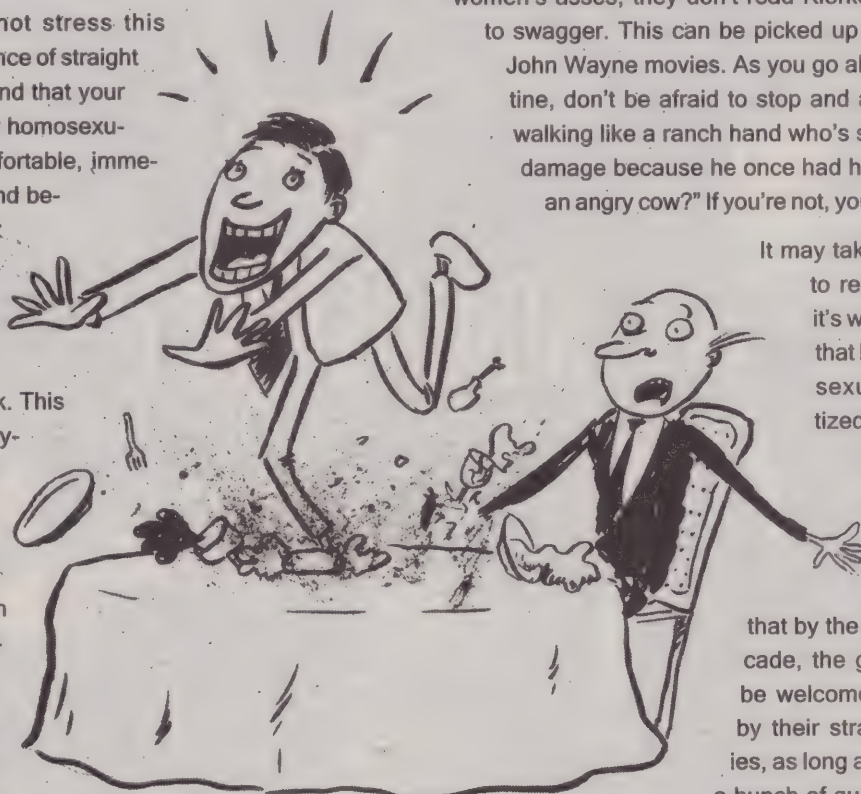
Instead, say this:

"Hello, my name is Jerrod, and because I never learned how traffic lights work I have hired this man, Frank, to follow me around the city and tell me when it's okay to cross the street. He must be with me all the time, otherwise, I could be killed."

3. Be aware of your mannerisms and speech. Gay men carry themselves in a much different way than their straight counterparts, and it's important to be aware of this. It's sometimes difficult for a gay man to walk and behave like a straight man, but it's not too difficult once you get the hang of it. One rule is to always walk with your elbows juttied outward slightly. This signifies that not only are you straight, but that you're ready to start punching somebody should they use words you don't understand. Remember, straight men play sports and stare at women's asses, they don't read Kierkegaard. Also, learn to swagger. This can be picked up by watching a few John Wayne movies. As you go about your daily routine, don't be afraid to stop and ask yourself, "Am I walking like a ranch hand who's suffering from brain damage because he once had his skull caved in by an angry cow?" If you're not, you need to try harder.

It may take years of practice to reach perfection, but it's well worth it. It wasn't that long ago that homosexuals were stigmatized by larger society, but as people become more enlightened, acceptance has grown. I predict

that by the end of the next decade, the gay community will be welcomed with open arms by their straight contemporaries, as long as they don't act like a bunch of queers. ☐

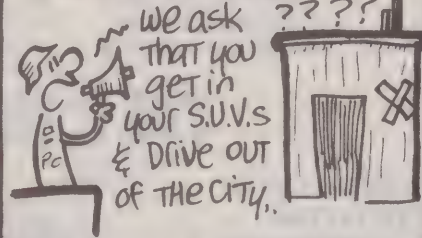


art by Marty Kelley

THE K CHRONICLES

BY KEITH KNIGHT

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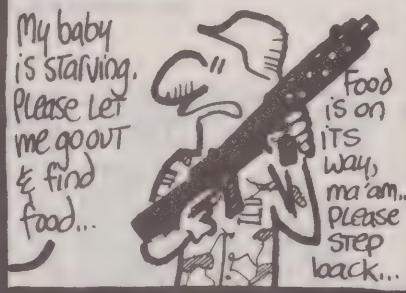


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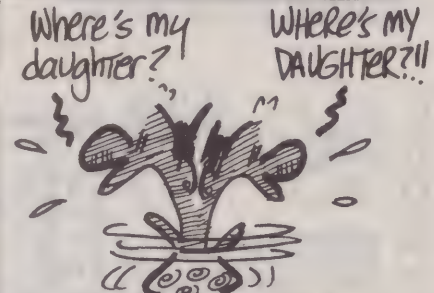
WHERE THEY WERE SUBJECT TO EXTREME OVERCROWDING



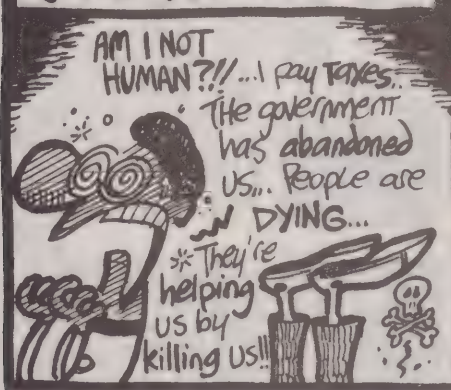
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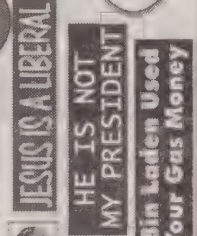
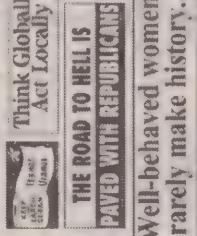
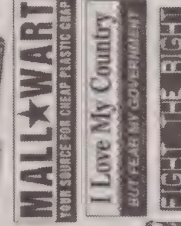
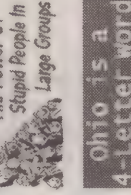
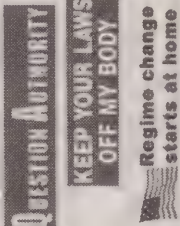
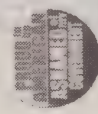
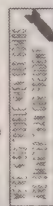


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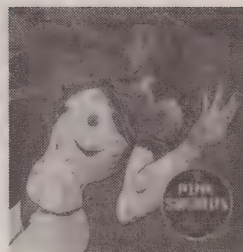
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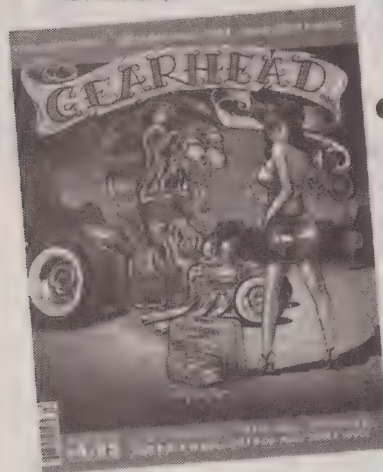
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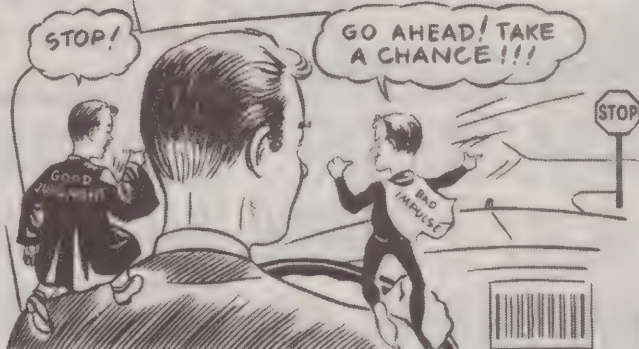


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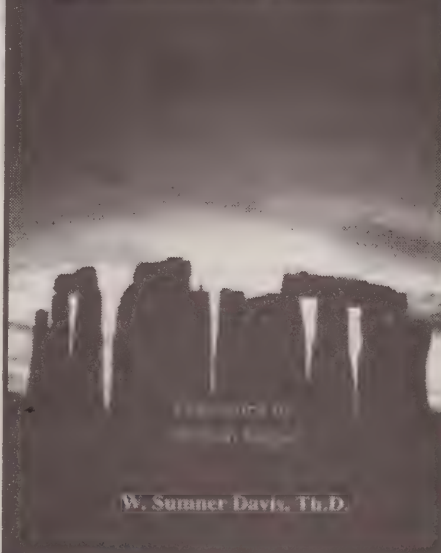
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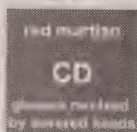
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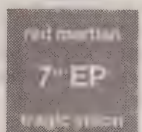
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TOP PICKS

Below represents the "best of" music that was reviewed for this issue as determined by IMPACT press music reviewers.



Alarm Will Sound • Acoustica: Alarm Will Sound Performs Aphex Twin • Cantaloupe Music • If you are a 22-piece classical group looking for a musical challenge, you decide to perform electronic music completely acoustically. And if you want a real challenge, you go for complicated electronic music by Aphex Twin. Not reinterpretations, but note for note reproductions. They had to find instruments and other objects that would let them make the sounds you usually hear coming out of Richard D. James's twisted mind. And the result was masterful. I immediately recognized the songs, covering mostly tunes from *Drukqs*, but also going as far back as *Selected Ambient Works Vol. 2*. (AL)

Astronautalis • You And Yer Good Ideas • Fighting Records • The best music is the hardest to define. The last thing I want to do is fail to express how good Astronautalis is. Passion is what sets him apart from the rest — that and his style of music, a stripped down, beat-driven sort of screwy indie rock, country, hip-hop blend. What the fuck?! Exactly, you haven't heard this before. You can cite similarities to Buck 65, Cex, Why?, Sage Francis, etc. The fact is, Astronautalis was a battle MC for eight years and decided to quit that game and play a new one. His vocal skills are still excellent, no longer battling but instead crafting intellectual, personal ditties that flow from his mouth, heart and eyes. The passionate songs grab hold of you, not with a big hook but with their sincerity. Certainly, there are catchy elements, but these songs survive off their honesty, a simple approach that is more complex than it first seems. If you're looking for something different than the cookie-cutter rock and hip-hop saturating the music scene, give Astronautalis a chance — and be sure to see him live if you get a chance. It will blow your fucking mind. (CM)

Cage • Hell's Winter • Definitive Jux • Cage's jump to Def Jux opened up a new world of bangin' beats and sounds that play the background to his often deranged outlook on life. Producers such as El-P, Camu Tao, RJD2 and Blockhead provide the right touches for his cocky flows and punchline persona. From the get go, "Good Morning" proves that Cage is an emcee that can put together a personally complex album that holds up from front to back. Descriptive tales about a son and a junkie dad, lead into various surreal struggles on "Lord Have Mercy." A political prowess is delivered on "Grand Ol Party Crash," where he begins by spitting "I wake up to a caffeine, cigarette vaccine, and bathe in water I wouldn't drink before gas'line," which explains much of his grimy attitude. Everything is arranged into a sonic soundscape that sounds good whether Cage is getting introspective, such as on the solid "Public Property," or a bit too disturbing to be take too literal. (JC)

Darkest Hour • Undoing Ruin • Victory Records • Forget Ozzfest, forget RoadRunner releases, throw away your Judas Priest records, and listen to me! If you'd like to know the definition of eccentric metal, harmonies, solos and pure manifested talent, then this highly anticipated album is everything you're yearning for and the answers about what to do about what metal has become. Darkest Hour, the name definitely rings a bell, and if it doesn't, pull yourself from MySpace and actually search the Internet for intelligible music or turn on Fuse TV. This band is slowly blowing up into the next Black Sabbath. Slowly churning the media and airwaves with their infectious melodies, solos, intensity, and a drummer whom I can not get enough of, Darkest Hour is

where metal is at, it's where music is at. If you don't believe me, ask Ozzy himself. He booked Darkest Hour on his Ozzfest tour last year. (CMax)

Dead Kennedys • Live at the Deaf Club • Manifesto Records • This CD is a must have for any Dead Kennedys fan for a few reasons. First, it was recorded when they were merely 8-months old as a band. Second, it was the last time they performed as a 5 piece with second guitarist 6025 (in fact, they left him off the cover art). Third, it contains a never-recorded track, "Gasoline." Fourth, it features a disco version of "Kill the Poor." Fifth, they cover "Back in the USSR," "Have I the Right," and "Viva Las Vegas." Sixth, it was a recording that they've wanted to release for a long time, but was held up by the long legal battles Jello Biafra has been fighting with the rest of the band. Finally, it sounds really good, even though it was recorded in 1979. What else do you need to know...? Just get it! (AL)

Emery • The Question • Tooth & Nail Records • Fans of Further Seems Forever, this album is for you. Mix a little Thrice and Recover together and you've got yourself the beginning of the new Emery CD. "So Cold I Could See My Breath" kicks off the album with perfect listener appeal. Equipped with killer vocal harmonies and just the right amount of pop, you can't wait to get to the next track to see if it's as good as the first. Believe me folks, it is. "Playing with Fire" toys with the pun in lyric line "I always thought you would be some sort of match for me". The verses have an Afghan Whigs' feel to them. If you dig any of the bands I just mentioned, then this CD is a perfect match for you. (SP)

Girlyman • Little Star • Daemon • Goddamn, this is fantastic. Really. A series of cosmic forces came together to generate this wonderful band (most notably that their first rehearsal was scheduled for 9/11). Their pure harmonies are so astonishingly brilliant and beautiful, floating like a buoy on a gently rolling sea of acoustic folk rock. The accompaniment is an eclectic range of instruments, a wonderful backdrop for the most excitingly tight vocals I have heard in a long while. Spellbinding. (DP)

Grand Buffet • Five Years of Fireworks • Fighting Records • The electro-hop kingpins are unlike anything out there. The Pittsburgh, Pa. duo has a keen sense for both catchy music and clever lyrics. At times downright funny and other times pointed, the lyrics are delivered with cocky confidence and a showman's perfection. "I wanna be a camp counselor with full benefits/Your son or daughter got a dog bit I've got a toumiquet." Tight, yo! And that's just a taste. When it comes to insanely amusing and witty lyrics, GB has it for you. Musically, the guys are a techno-rock-pop-grunge wet dream. With nutty beats, weird bleeps, loops, layered tracks, the guys complete the package. Vocals, solid, lyrics, super solid, music, you'll dance your ass off. Included on this 13-track release (plus separate DVD chockfull of goodies) are several remastered versions of their best tracks (including "Candy Bars," "Benjamin Franklin Music," and "Matt and Nate") and some new stuff. This is amped up, creative electro-hip-hop that doesn't take itself too seriously, but then again, this shit is seriously good. (CM)

Sherwood • Sing, But Keep Going • Sidecho Records • Sing, But Keep Going is the debut full length from Sherwood. I instantly fell in love with it. Their lead vocalist's voice is beautiful. Combine that with the band's hook filled, indie

pop melodies and get ready to swoon. The clap and sing along parts give the album an almost live feel at times. With stated influences such as The Beach Boys and Jimmy Eat World, no wonder this band is so amazing. (KB)

The Yellowbelts • self-titled • Eugene Records • Like Velvet Revolver? The New York Dolls? Hanoi Rocks? Then you need The Yellowbelts. This is punk with more attitude than you can shake a can of hairspray at. I have no idea how this band hails from Kentucky, but thank God they didn't waste their talents on honky-tonk. Tight musically, but loose enough to be an absolute blast, and Lawrence Tarpey knows just the right amount of screaming to apply to put every song over the top. And the lyrics? Forget it. I haven't heard anything this fun in a long time. Take a look (from "Crash Landers"): "Planet of the Apes read the letters on the sign, it was Southland 68 in 1969... Well the tires spit the gravel while I was hiding in the trunk, and the speakers on the post said it's good to be a punk. Put it on your head and wear it like a hat, and get yourself a dog and walk it like a cat!" I don't care where you're from, those are F'ing great lyrics. Go listen to this and try not to get instantly hooked. Like a fat kid on cake, if you know what I'm sayin'. This is brilliant! (SH)

Various Artists • Punk Rock is Your Friend - Kung Fu Records Sampler #6 • Kung Fu Records • This compilation quickly became one of my favorites. It features twenty three songs from various bands such as The Vandals, Tsunami Bomb, H2O, and Bouncing Souls, just to name a few. The album has a healthy mix of punk rock and hardcore songs on it. Hence the added title of *Hardcore is Your Friend, Too*. Some of my favorite songs on the comp are *She Looks Good*, by Audio Karate, *Lost Again*, by Dance Hall Crashers, and *Sixes and Sevens*, by Faultier. Not only does this CD have fun and catchy songs, but it is super cheap as well. If you go buy it, I am almost positive you will fall in love with bands you never listened to before. I know I did. (KB)

Why? • Elephant Eyelash • Anticon • Being indefinable, unclassifiable, is something I figure a lot of musicians strive for and many will cringe when you say what genre you think they fit in. Why? has successfully created a sound that doesn't fit a single genre and there is no single artist out there doing what he's doing. While it may be defined by some as a pop album, its hip-hop, experimental electro and indie rock influences create a melding of sounds that results in a unique 12-track album. At times I think I'm listening to They Might Be Giants, other times it's truly indescribable — just great pop tunes with a strange, one-of-a-kind sound that keeps it fresh. There's a quirky, playfulness throughout that is met head on by a seriousness that creates quite a conflict, but one that only improves on the results. Lyrically, Why? is a poet who seems at times poignant and at times absurd. No matter, it all sounds good whether you understand what he's saying or not. (CM)

You Will Die • self-titled • Hawthorne Street • I have always had a special place in my heart for all things instrumental and this band is one the reasons why. You Will Die play instrumental metal much like Pelican or The Kick Ass only a lot more accessible than most instrumental bands. I'm not trying to down play their technical abilities by calling them accessible I am only trying say they aren't as mathy as most in the same genre. If you are a fan of metal and music this is the perfect entry level CD to send you well on your way to becoming the next math rock snob. (RP)

☆ quickies...a little bit on a lot of records ☆

CD releases

[a]pendics.shuffle • My Helicopter Heart • Orac Records • [a]pendics.shuffle's music is for the heavy techno fan. The beats are repetitive, all sounds are processed in some way, and vocals are manipulated. The samples seem to be snippets of larger sounds, thrown in here and there. (AL)

[Daryl] Black Tie Dynasty • Bloody Basin • Idol Records • This split from [Daryl] and Black Tie Dynasty features both bands, ten members in all, on the first track. The CD continues with two new Black Tie Dynasty songs. Both of these songs are slightly dark but are also very catchy and danceable. Next up are two songs from [Daryl], one of which is a cover. Their songs have a more indie rock feel to them but they are just as infectious as the rest of the album. The CD ends with a second collaboration, this time from the lead singer of each group. These bands compliment each other's style well and together, they have put out an exceptional split. (KB)

4 Past Midnight • Trials and Tribulations • SOS Records • You say that you are an old school punk rock hard ass? You'll love this. Very catchy songs in that authentic late '70s style that made punk so fun. Very aggressive and loud. Sounds a bit like the Vindictives in spots, but without the horribly whiny vocals. You can easily imagine that this is a show filled with Mohawks and really tall Doc Martins. If you don't like it, these guys will punch you. (MK)

A Change Of Pace • An Offer You Can't Refuse • Immortal Records • Think of every melodic emo core band you know of, and this band encompasses them. I thought of Thrice immediately with similar guitar tones, melodies, the occasional screams and double bass rhythms. Normally, I might start to tear a new one for this band in the originality category, but I'll give them a break. I'm just so sick of hearing this sound regurgitated over and over. The only advantage this band has is their age. These boys are between 16-18 and this is their debut album. With this in mind, they are extremely talented and I think with time they will develop their own, unique style and something very interesting will spawn from this seed. This is a well-polished CD, produced by Michael "Elvis" Baskette (Incubus, Three Days Grace, Chevelle). It's tight, punchy, catchy rhythms that will drive the little girls crazy and make the boys want to be them. If you don't believe me, just check out their MySpace page. I almost wanted to be them. (MP)

A Day To Remember • And Their Name Was Treason • Indianola Records • Affectionately referred to as "pop mosh," these natives from my hometown of Ocala, Fla. deliver just that in their Indianola Records debut. An intriguing mix of post-hardcore, straight emo, acoustic and breakdowns found on many Victory releases, ADTR seeks to obtain the stronghold of every music genre ever made and smash their fist into it, which is also an indication of what their live show brings. Along with this euphoric blend of music, the lyrics and harmonies are something of the typical, clichéd, and simple, yet they'll leave you asking for your dearest friend to pile drive you due to the simple fact that the songs will not go away. (CMax)

A Million Billion • Today We Love You • Filthy Schoolgirls • Ryan Smith makes electronic music that would appeal to fans of Squarepusher or Autechre. His electronic compositions sometimes seem to go in random directions, more sound collections than songs. However, he does include a few songs that not only feature his soft, somewhat whispered vocals, but are actually catchy. (AL)

A Perfect Murder • Strength Through Vengeance • Victory Records • An onslaught of Victory releases have become prevalent in the last few months. This release has been receiving a multitude of airplay, videoplay, and so forth, and I'm contemplating as to why. A Perfect Murder's second full-length release on Victory Records is sadly nothing that tickled my fancy. Traditional beat down hardcore intertwined with cheesy ghoulish Mastodon-type vocals. (CMax)

A Wilhelm Scream • Ruiner • Nitro Records • There might be no melodi-core band out there better than A Wilhelm Scream. Forget Thrice, Hawthorne Heights, Thursday or any of those other bands who mix an emo-attitude with hardcore. AWS does it better. Instead of having a distinct difference in their sung and screamed vocals, AWS is more even-handed. They do have some screamed stuff and sung stuff, but it's not as drastic; they find a way to do it effectively, as opposed to the obnoxiousness of some many other bands that employ the technique. On top of their effective vocal style and overall musical prowess, AWS has some badass guitar work, tearing across the songs, adding both melody and chaos and occasionally mixing in a metal-worth solo. Those who like their rock hard but still full of melody, look no further. Added bonus: Bill Stevenson (Descendents) and Jason Livermore produced, engineered and mixed the album and the result is exceptional. (CM)

Accursed Dawn • Manifest Damnation (The Creation Effect) • Pop Faction Records • I see on AD's website that they're looking for a new drummer. Good fucking luck! This is the most intense, ear-

shattering drumming I've ever heard. Think Iced Earth on speed. Metalcore, death, thrash, whatever you want to call it, it's intense and progressive. Fans of Carcass and Death will want to chew glass while listening to this. Oh, and good luck with that whole new drummer thing. (SH)

Achilles • The Dark Horse • Hex Records • Dammit. I knew no sooner than I proclaimed Label the Traitor the hardest hardcore I'd heard this issue, someone else would come along and sure as shit they did. Achilles is mainly hardcore, but they get downright metal on tracks like "In Lights" and the title cut. They take on a Deftones feel on those tracks, but one thing is constant: SCREAM! (SH)

Alciabades Jones • Refraction Mirage • Refraction Mirage Records • Alciabades Jones is a versatile fusion trio that plays instrumental music. They blend rock, jazz, and funk in this catchy album. They even play a bit of bluegrass-inspired slide guitar on one track. The album sounds like a group of buddies who are having a hell of a time, sometimes improvising as they play. (AL)

Allegiance • Overlooked • Rival Records • Surprisingly, I've found another straight ahead hardcore band. Hint the tinges of sarcasm. However, I'm astonished to see that they're all good. Allegiance delivers their brand of straight-ahead mixed with tough guy hardcore that sounds traditional and common, until you're subjected to structured breakdowns, triplets, and so forth. Allegiance attempts to break the boundary of straight-ahead hardcore being easy and, I must admit, the songs are structured, which definitely is a rarity in the style. I'm a little bogged down with their lyrics and the repetition of certain words, however, they're just angry and they've been overlooked thus far. (CMax)

Ambyr • Holding on by the Blindfolds We Hide Behind • The Death Scene • Ever hear of New Found Glory? Sum 41? Like that shit? Get to know Ambyr. You'll like them better because THEY'RE better. (SH)

Amy Ray • Prom • Daemon • Veteran rocker and Indigo Girl Amy Ray busts out another solo album, deeply rooted in her powerful, raw songwriting. Amy has always been the darker and edgier of the Indigo Girls, and here she takes on the stuffy, soul-crushing establishments of mainstream and right-wing America with songs about sexuality, rebellion, and the cultural horrors of life in rural America. She does seem a little bit sunnier than her last time out, and these songs have a more poppy sensibility. (DP)

Anagram • Songs from Far Away • Scenery • I can count about a dozen influences of this German duo as I listen to their record. Within their decidedly European-electronic soundtrack, they invoke the spirit of so many great masters in the field and create a dazzling amalgam all their own: It is a passionate, gritty, almost visual kind of music that does not come up short on balls. Exceptionally well-made. (DP)

Atmosphere • You Can't Imagine How Much Fun We're Having • Rhymesayers • Slug and Ant are back and this album (their fifth studio offering) is better than the last one, just like they hoped. There's a lot more originality and standout tracks on here. The production is tighter and there's a better vibe. Ant's production is flawless, funky and varied, using many musical styles, various samples, loops and beats all mixed up and tossed about into a work of art. There's an old school vibe on here that brings to mind KRS-One, and that's a hell of a compliment. Meanwhile, Slug is dropping rhymes like Raid drops flies. Flippin' lyrics like they were veggieburgers. Slug is frying the competition with his skilled rhyme delivery. Clever review writing aside, this guy is among the elite MCs in the hip-hop biz. Thirteen tracks thick, *You Can't Imagine...* may be Atmosphere's best album to date. (CM)

ATWAR & Cell Block Five Split • Live Cheap CD • Malt Soda Re-

cordings • I love when the title of a CD explains the context of the CD in itself. Not necessarily degrading the talent of the two bands, however, this CD is very hard to follow. Both bands are performing live intertwined with a bad mix of everything mechanically possible. Bad equals many unpleasant listeners, myself for example. The bands bring you power chord anthems of anarchy, incompetent government, and action in the vein of Anti-Flag, The Threats, and classical Oi quintets. I would suggest that you buy a studio-recorded version of these songs or studio albums rather than spending

your money on a "cheap live CD." (CMax)

Baxter • Swell • self-released • Baxter is a three-piece band out of Southern California. Their name comes from the singer, Matt Baxter. On some of the tracks, his voice is reminiscent of Bradley Nowell, of Sublime fame. Baxter's music is a cross between indie rock and pop punk. Songs like *My Heart Has Already Been Broken* are beautiful and instant favorites. Not all the songs have this sort of instant appeal, but those end up growing on you as well. (KB)

Bayside • self-titled • Victory Records • The sophomore effort from Bayside is a strong, very tight, power pop punk album filled with catchy, solid songs. Once again, we have this sound, over and over. Will it ever end, or at least evolve? This band is good at creating rock driven melodies with high vocals in the tone of early Saves The Day. If you are looking for another band in the sea of this post hardcore pop punk, then this is your band. If you are looking for an original sound, don't waste your time. Produced by Shep Goodman and Kenny Gioia (Mandy Moore, Aaron Carter), it is extremely polished and ready for a video on TRL. (MP)

BEDlight for BlueEYES • The Dawn • Trustkill Records • What makes this band stand out from the multitude of bands mixing hardcore with melodic vocals is that lead singer Christian Andre Guerrero can actually sing. He trained as a singer, and it shows. It also helps that the rest of the band kicks ass as well, with both aggression and catchiness. They are not afraid to show their soft side either, with a slow tempo number as the second track of the album. (AL)

Benoit Pioulard • Enge EP • Moodgadget • Not since Ebeling Hughes has someone making dreamy pop music caught my attention like this. Benoit Pioulard (AKA Thomas Meluch) put me in a trance with his smooth vocals and hazy atmospheric sounds, including bells, handclaps, and other unidentified objects. On the instrumental "es/sa," he weaves guitars and adds a bunch of echo, which I guarantee will put you to sleep in no time. (AL)

Big Bear • self-titled • Monitor Records • Big Bear play their own style of music, blending hardcore with intertwining guitars and off-kilter drumming and tortured screams. It is extremely hard to compare this band to another for the simple fact that these guys have really got a style that is all their own. If one were forced to compare, I would have to say they are a cross between Hoover and Unwound, only a little more obtuse and angular. (RP)

Bold • The Search 1985-1989 • Revelation Records • Thirty-two songs, \$11. What else do I have to say? I could also mention that this is great, legendary '80s hardcore from one of the best to play it. This album includes everything they recorded. I really shouldn't have to say anything else. (SH)

Boyracer • Insults and Insights EP • Kiltbridge Records • This band is quite interesting. They have a ton of releases and have gone through about forty different members. This EP is melodic and catchy indie pop. It is a little quirky but definitely a lot of fun. The dual male and female vocals are one of my favorite parts of this trio. This EP will have your foot tapping along in no time. (KB)

Brakes • Give Blood • Rough Trade • 16 songs that seem to defy a general classification. Pop rock, I suppose best covers it, but this is not typical radio pop, that goodness. It flies all over the place from rock to disco to country. A little tough to follow at times... Good musicianship and tight songwriting make this disc sound like something you think you've heard before, even though you're sure you haven't. (MK)

Broken Spindles • Inside/Absent • Saddle Creek • Slightly discordant, slightly muffled, this album is a work of artistic desperation, and the good kind. It is music in minor keys that haunts the soul, employing loops and minimalist instrumentation, with vocals that

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seem to float just beneath the surface and that never quite break through. The result is eerie, emotional, and wayward—a cry from the heart, as though the artist is laboring to get all of this out. (DP)

California Redemption • This Time It's for Money • Let Them Eat Records • I actually had just heard about this band after reviewing *Mix De Punk!* Vol. 2. The songs on *This Time It's for Money* are fast and aggressive. One of my favorite things about California Redemption is that they are not afraid to address any issue. From the government and religion to youth culture, each song has a strong message and opinionated view. From all I have heard about this band, performance wise, I would love to see them live. (KB)

Cantona • A Sort of Smile • self-released • This Seattle-based power pop band delivers solid rock and roll with great emotional fullness. With female vocals and great harmonies, song after song on this EP just sounds right. Of particular note are the melodic guitar lines that flicker diligently in the background and are an important component in their individual style. It's all there. (DP)

Cats and Jammers • Propose Toast • Scotch Hell Records • If Davey Joves from The Monkees was listed as a member of this band, I wouldn't be the least bit surprised. This is pop punk at its poppiest. This is a collection of tunes from their first 3 discs. A "Best Of..." for a band you've probably never heard of. And that's too bad. This is funny music that is horribly infectious and will bore into your skull and lay eggs and make you want to listen to it over and over. It is good stuff. (MK)

Champion • Time Slips Away • Bridge Nine Records • The current legends of anything that starts with a "hard" and ends with a "core," this band has paved the way for numerous up and coming acts. These straight-ahead hardcore pioneer's are at it again with their second full-length release and it's all you could ask for! Beatdowns, breakdowns, sing-alongs, and intensity! Oh... and don't let me forget about the straightedge! What more could you ask for? It's hardcore at its best. They're Champion, and if they're not already, they're about to be your new favorite band. (CMK)

Chevreuil • Sport • Sick Room Records • It's only been since months since Chevreuil released *Chateaufallon*, and they still wrote enough music for another album. This duo uses only guitars and drums only to create songs that seem highly layered and intricate. Their instrumental math rock is less heavy than Don Caballero and slightly less frenetic than Hella, and is well worth a listen. (AL)

Chiodos • All's Well That Ends Well • Equal Vision Records • This Flint, MI sextet can be compared to At The Drive In for their ferocity and to Coheed and Cambria for their vocals. They are not just clones though, injecting their own style into their music, sometimes adding piano and keyboards to add some emotion to their sound. (AL)

Choose Your Weapon • Heart for the Heartless • Spook City Records • Damn! Spook City is the shit this time around! I've reviewed a healthy dose of hardcore from their label and, no offense to any of those other bands, but CYW is the best off the Spook City label I've heard. Their breakdowns are absolutely ferocious and the riffs are gargantuan. Big words, right? Big band. Big songs. Big energy. (SH)

Cipher • Children of God's Fire • Uprising Records • No, that's not "Sanitarium" that's playing in the background on this first track, but it sure sounds like it. Perhaps that's a good precursor for what you're about to hear on this 15-song disc. This is metal/hardcore with some Biohazard influence. It's almost rapcore, but not quite. This is a seriously talented band. The musicianship is incredibly tight. (SH)

Coffinberry • From Now On Now • Morpheus Records • The third track "Eva" is very reminiscent of early Death Cab in its rhythmic structure where the drums are concerned. "What Do You Want To Do" has a Longwave feel to it by way of guitars. Not a bad band, although an incredibly ridiculous name. With respect to the mix, the

whole drum sound is borrowed from early Death Cab and this is not a bad thing at all. "Oh Elise" has a Lennon-Beatlesque feel to it. You will witness it through the chord progression that backs the guitar solo at the very end of the song. (SP)

Collective Efforts • Trail Mix • Arc the Finger • This crew from Atlanta delivers layered beats with turntable scratches and an alternative to the regular sounds you'll find on the radio and music television stations. "We trying to change the things coming through your ears, and get the bling-bling out of here, I ain't sayin' it's wrong, I just been hearing it way to long" is one of the bottom line flows that shows what Collective Efforts is striving to provide in their world of positive changes. Carrying the underground hip-hop torch, Ben Hameen, J-Mil and Bambu de Asiatic provide the lyrical insight, as DJ Creashun blends the sounds. Each track has touches of orchestrated samples, pianos, guitars, flutes and harmonies mixed with drum kicks that add depth to the overall product. (JC)

Continental • What Was Gained From What Was Lost • U-Dot Records • This is Continental's third album for U-Dot Records, and in it they continue to play mellow instrumental rock with some technical tendencies. I was especially getting a Tristezza vibe during the CD closer "Pillow Talk." Their experimentation with vocals was not necessary. The vocals fell out of place in an otherwise great record. (AL)

Courtney Blush • Sweet Modern Fairy Tales • self-released • I've been noted for my overuse of the word "eccentric," and honestly it's an adjective used to cover up a horrible band, there's slight chance I find a band worthy of the term, and I found one. Courtney Blush uses abstract structures, beats, and lyrics in order to jumble together everyone's favorite bands, The Used, Glassjaw, and As Cities Burn in order to model their specific blend of psychedelic post hardcore with the sporadic solo and breakdown, jazz fusion, and rap couplet. The recording needs a little work and so does the band itself, however, not bad for not known or signed. Check it out. (CMK)

Curl Up And Die • The One Above All, The End Of All That Is • Revelation Records • Curl Up And Die is a band that stands out from the rest of the mediocre hardcore bands out there. They are not afraid to experiment with slower tempos or unusual musical structures, all the while keeping their sound aggressive, especially the throat-ripping vocals. (AL)

Cursive • The Difference Between Houses and Homes (Lost Songs and Loose Ends 1995-2001) • Saddle Creek Records • This compilation consists of early 7 inch recordings as well as two previously unreleased tracks. The emergence of experimental indie rock would not be what it is today without a band like Cursive. The offbeat and often over-stressed vocals of Tim Kasher shine on tracks like "And the Bit Just Chokes Them" and the opener "Dispenser". The sound here is right out of the late nineties. You can feel the relevance of experimentation and manipulation of standard rock song formula throughout the album and in particular on "There's a Coldest Day in Every Year". A must for Cursive fans. (SP)

Da Threat • Ghetto Scripture • Godfather Entertainment • The Jacksonville, Florida duo of Good Boi and Sir Louis, boast about their country-southern roots and ghetto bravado throughout this release. Songs about thugs running the streets, girls at the club, their cars of choice ("Chevy"), and of course songs about money are all included. On "Been Through" and "Hard But Fair," Da Threat get a little more insightful as they spit rhymes about their struggles leading up to the music biz, but tracks like "Back & Forth" and "Hell Naw" don't feel half as sincere. Overall, you could compare what they do to Goodie Mob, with all the ruggedness and remorse included. (JC)

Daikajiu • self-titled • Reptile Records • While Daikajiu plays surf music, you feel a little bit of an edge in their sound. Maybe their drums hit a bit harder, or their guitars have a bit more reverb than usual. Whatever it is, it does them well. Fans of surf music, as well melodramatics (they all wear Kabuki masks) will be won over by their sound. (AL)

Daphne Loves Derby • On the Strength of All Convinced • Outlook Music Company • The first time I heard anything about Daphne Loves Derby was on the internet. So was the second time. And the third. The band used this technology tool to market their music and the result has been a widespread and rapidly growing fan base. *On the Strength of All Convinced* is a well-rounded album. The harmonies and melodies span over piano ballads as well as more

upbeat, indie rock songs. If the band keeps up with it's promoting, I can definitely see Daphne Loves Derby gaining more attention and praise in the future. (KB)

Death by Stereo • Death for Life • Epitaph Records • I probably don't have to do much of a review on this one but, dammit, this is what I don't get paid for so here goes: anyone who's watched *Headbanger's Ball* on MTV lately has probably seen the video for "Entombed, We Collide." So if you've seen the video here's a big "no shit" for you: This band kicks ass! If you enjoy getting your face melted off by some amazing hardcore, I suggest you go get this immediately. And then go see DBS with Avenged Sevenfold on tour together this fall! (SH)

Deep Dish • George Is On • Thrive Records • If you are a fan of house music, and also like guitars, then you'll like Deep Dish's "guitar-house" sound. Their tunes are highly danceable, and are varied enough that you can listen to the album and not get bored. They also got Stevie Nicks to record vocals for their rework of "Dreams" and used parts of Dire Straits's "Money For Nothing" in a mash-up with their own track, "Flashdance." (AL)

Dek • Wattatata • Finger Records • From the cartoon artwork on the cover, one would expect a pop or indie CD inside. This was not the case with Dek's latest release. These kids are a fast paced, punk, rock and roll band. I did say kids, and I meant it. These guys are all under the legal drinking age. But you would not think it from listening to their album. They are capable of spitting out politically charged songs with vocals to match the angst behind the lyrics. These boys are definitely talented way beyond their years. (KB)

Delaney • self-titled • Lithium • So many different bands are named Delaney, but this one is the French one. Delaney sing highly rhythmic pop music with some electronica qualities, almost all of which is in their native tongue. This makes for a very seductive quality that is difficult to impossible to find in American music. Mellow and smooth with soft-spoken lyrics, this is a delightful and relaxing rock/electro album. (DP)

DeNunzio • Continuous Vaudeville • Spiderlight Records • DeNunzio is from Evergreen, Colorado. Their new album contains nine new tracks as well as a cover of *Moth*, originally by the band Pond. It is mostly a rock album with some indie and punk influences. It is a decent CD but does not grab at you right away. (KB)

Dexter Danger • Hellaforia • Orange Peel Records • Dexter Danger is a band based out of San Francisco, California. They figured out quickly that the internet was a great networking tool and used it to their advantage. This album is full of fun punk rock songs that will get you moving in no time. They are catchy, without being too pop-influenced. Think of it as a more mature punk rock sound. This band definitely has potential to get a lot bigger. (KB)

Die Young • Survival Instinct • Immigrant Sun Records • Intense punkcore here. Really solid breakdowns in just about every song. They lull you into this false sense of the song slowing down and then they crack you right across the jaw with another burst of metal. Take that! (SH)

DNME • Last of a Dying Breed • No Dice Records • For some reason, DNME thinks hardcore is a dying breed. I got news for ya: not as long as these guys keep this up. This is straight-ahead hardcore, just like it should be played. Mosh it up! (SH)

Dog Men Poets • Birth of the Cool • self-released • With a steady beat, in the vein of a mellow 311 or Everlast, this album starts out with "Anthem," a song that plugs the bands very name. Things progress with guitars and a live hip-hop sound that bridges the gap between funk and folk. It's an all around fun record, and you don't need to laugh at the title to realize it would be. The further they drift into more of a rock sound, the better it becomes clear that a rock/funk thing is more so their style, instead of the attempts at being too humorous in a 1980's hip hop way. (JC)

Donnybrook • Lions in This Game • Hand of Hope Records • I know this is cliché but I can't help it. I'm taking a page right from Donnybrook themselves: this is a hardcore band, made up by hardcore kids, playing for the love of the hardcore scene, period. There's nothing fancy here. This is tight, catchy hardcore. What's even better, you can actually make out what lead singer Dre Stewart is saying! Imagine that! Donnybrook is on tour through the fall and they're playing the U.S. from coast-to-coast. Check this show out! (SH)

Eli Good • Bride of the Bull • Feast or Famine • This four-piece plays dreamy alternative pop music with some definite country sensibilities. The vocals, which exist in sort of a detached, echoed state, create a truly astral tone. With great ambient sounds twittering and oscillating in the back, there are some really wonderful tracks here that are highly meditative, eminently stylish, and otherworldly. (DP)

Elliott • Photorecording • Revelation Records • Elliott has been playing their brand of indie rock for many years now, but that has all come to an end. On this, their final album, they offer up creatively orchestrated, dramatic rock that is thick with layers of sound. The 14 tracks on here vary from intense rock songs to mellow, passionate indie rock gems. Every song, though, flows effortlessly. At times, the pace

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is so gradual that I become borderline bored. But then the music picks up or the instrumentation changes and I'm once again awed by their musical skill. Also included is a DVD documentary of their final tour, plus footage from live shows over the last two years. (CM)

Empty Silos Echo War • *The Inner Working Mechanics of a Failed Construct* • **Rok Lok Records** • Even though these songs were written during the same time as the songs on their previous album, *Semantics*, the two albums are not similar. This album is less experimental. While the dual vocals sometimes play well with each other, at times they compete with each other, sounding a bit messy. (AL)

Ennio Morricone • *Crime and Dissonance* • **Ipecac Recordings** • Ennio Morricone is known as a prolific film composer, with more than 500 films under his belt. This double CD set includes thirty tracks from the late '60s through mid-'70s, all of which are from Italian films. Since it is being put out on Mike Patton's Ipecac Recordings, you can correctly assume that these are not going to be the easiest tracks to listen to. These are the weird tracks, the ones with unusual instrumentation, screams, and heavy breathing. (AL)

Facing New York • *Self-titled* • **Five One, Inc.** • From the opening track of this album, it would not seem that this CD has much to offer. But after listening to the rest of the song, as well as the others, it is obvious that this band deserves a chance. Facing New York engineered and produced their own album. They also recorded it as they would play the songs live; all in one room, creating music together. The album hits lyrically where most people in their young adult life are. With lyrics based around the band members lives the past year, the songs reflect feelings of trying to make their dreams come true and make a living. This is all done through tight indie rock with a creative punk punch. It is definitely an album that unexpectedly hooks you in. (KB)

Favorite Saints • *Southern Gentlemen EP* • *self-released* • This is mid-tempo male and female vocal indie pop. It's Alison Rich as the voice of Mrs. George Bailey, whatever that means. There's really not a catchy feel to this EP. If anything it has a seventies feel to it at times like in "Near Dark". There are too few moments in the music when I even care to see where it's going because my interest is lost at the beginning of each track. The folk appeal is undeniable in the intro of "Airport Chapel" shortly followed by the orient viola. The problem lies when the vocals come in. All of a sudden everything crashes and burns and before you know it you're praying for your favorite saint to come and take away this EP. (SP)

Felt • *Felt 2: A Tribute to Lisa Bonet* • **Rhymesayers** • Slug and Murs are at it again, this time substituting the sounds on *A Tribute to Christina Ricci*, with the Midwestern beats of Atmosphere's other half, Ant. The outcome is a fun, but unbalanced blend of solid flows and clever rhymes over funk-fueled sounds. These emcees start the show by reintroducing themselves with a few average tracks, before entertaining with a skit, then the hook, "I'm just trying to live life cool - Morris Day." On "Early Mornin' Tony," Felt rides out a mix of vintage beats with Murs finishing things off by spitting "I got more rhymes than rappers who got shot." The production continues to improve as things progress, allowing both emcees a chance to come into their own on tracks like "Breaker Down Like a Shotgun" and "Marvin Gaye." The reason their first tribute album to an underappreciated actress worked so well was probably because they left the run-of-the-mill songs where they were last heard, in the studio. (JC)

Fight Night • *Our End is Near* • **Spook City Records** • Just like their label-mates, Nerve Gas Tragedy, Fight Night churns out brutally fast and intense hardcore. Think Slipknot. (SH)

FIYA • *Better Days* • **No Idea Records** • This isn't quite punkcore but it's really close. This is fast and furious rock that doesn't give up once it starts. A nice break from the growling and screaming hardcore that's become so popular. You get 10 tracks from this Gainesville, Florida four-piece. (SH)

Fleas and Lice • *Recipes for Catastrophes* • **Rodent Popsicle Records** • This is raw punk stuff that could have been made in the '70s. The Sex Pistols for '05. (SH)

Go It Alone • *The Only Blood Between Us* • **Rival Records** • Go It Alone is a tight knit hardcore package bringing you blood shed (literally), fury, and everything every "hxe" kids have come to enjoy. This four-piece shows that hardcore can be achieved without the extra nonsense, without the craftiness, without the additional help on every song, hence the name. This 12-song disc brings you hardcore. It's plain, it's simple, it's good, and you'll enjoy it. (CMax)

Golden Chariots of Mars • *Self-titled* • **Magnetic Sea Sound Recordings** • This Minnesota quartet is fronted by singer Catie Larson. Her powerful voice is perfectly blended with the rock and roll riffs produced by the rest of the band. They have differently paced songs which showcases Larson's voice in multiple ways. The album is altogether very solid. (KB)

Grabass Charlestons • *Ask Mark Twain* • **No Idea Records** • This Gainesville, Florida based band has a fast paced punk style to their music. The singer's voice is gritty and the songs have a catchy and

honest quality to them. It is nice to see a band here and there that does not focus all their time and lyrics on girls. The song titles and added sentences under the lyrics of each song keep the insert entertaining as well. (KB)

Her Space Holiday • *The Past The Present The Future* • **Wichita Recordings/World's Fair Label Group** • It's been almost ten years since Marc Bianchi started recording under the Her Space Holiday moniker. His music has always been on the soft side, with hushed vocals and minimal guitars, plus some electronic effects. On this album, he ventures a bit with slightly happier music, with some of the tracks being almost danceable. (AL)

High School Sweethearts • *Heels n' Wheels* • **Get Hip** • Jersey represent! This band's "part trash, part panache" style stands out dramatically with gritty, hard-rocking pop. It's a strange mix - it is at some times beach rock, sometimes metal... like brushing your teeth with a wire brush and chewing bubble gum with your mouth open. Eminently diggable, it's just the kind of punk rock attitude that this summer needs. (DP)

Hiretsukan • *End States* • *self-released* • Screaming emote here. Quick, intense songs that will leave your ears blistered and bloody. In a good way, of course. (SH)

Honestly • *Ghosts of a Brilliant Past* • *self-released* • Memo to friends of Honestly: start washing their cars. Do their laundry. This band is going to be huge. As soon as some savvy A&R guy hears this, it's caviar dreams for this pop-alt band. If they can get "Answer" on one of those WB shows, forget about it - instant stardom. Fans of Lifehouse and Three Doors Down will swoon over this. The music is tight, the lyrics are sincere and a song like "Another Fool" will make your girlfriend cry like, well, a girl. (SH)

Hoods/Freya • *split CD* • **Victory Records** • The astounding Victory Records, obviously taking a note from BYO Records' successful pile-up of splits has brought to you two hard-hitting underground household names (if such a thing exists) in hardcore. Infectious sing-alongs, floor-stomping breakdowns, chugs, and thirst-quenching interludes, are offered by both bands whom have toured nationally and played various festivals such as Hellfest. This is one of the best hardcore albums I've ever come across. (CMax)

I Self Divine • *Self Destruction* • **Rhymesayers** • Picking apart one mans mind, body and soul, I Self Divine releases his first solo offering with solid production help and a heavy collection of personal struggles through the everyday. On "Live in the Moment," he examines the minimal options and the evident path of staying on the grind while continuing the theme of struggling through the hardships of life. The front man of the Micranots and member of Semi.Official and The Dynospectrum, I Self flows over beats by Ant, Jake One, Vitamin D and Bean One. He touches on the ills that come with a light wallet, the long road of a single parent, and the temptations of the female being. (JC)

ID and Sleeper • *Displacement* • **Mush Records** • Sleeper provides the lo-fi sounds of hip-hop inspired beats mixed with the stripped down elements of experimental rock music. The soundscape is a perfect compliment to the storytelling and rhyme style that the emcee of this duo provides. Incorporating the indie-emcee sound into his music by opening his inner confessions through introspective wordplay, the rainy afternoon vibe is packed with detailed lyrics that offer plenty to pay attention to. *Displacement* is best heard from start to finish, where songs like "Catcher," "Stranger" and "Nothing...New" has a chance to stand out and accentuates the entire collective. (JC)

Induce • *Cycle* • **Wonder Sound** • Induce's debut album is great to relax after a long night of partying. It is full of instrumental hip-hop that has elements of jazz and electronica fused into it. The result is a smooth sound has an ambient quality to it. (AL)

Inquisition • *Revolution...I Think It's Called Inspiration* • **A-F Records** • This was a great album when it came out in 2000. Since then, lead singer Thomas moved on to Strike Anywhere, Rob ended up in Ann Baretta and Mark joined River City High. How about that for cred? This is one of those records that never really got the attention it deserved when it first came out. It's exceptional both lyrically and musically. A-F Records thinks so, too, and has re-released the album. This band reminds me most of the band Thomas ended up in (the aforementioned

tioned Strike Anywhere), with his rough-but-solid-vocals belting out socially-aware tunes as the music rips across the background, employing killed tempo changes, great sing-along parts and an uptempo punk rock pace. For those who missed it when it came out the first time, don't miss it again. (CM)

Inspector Owl • *Patterns of Nerve-Cell Action* • **Oh Nona Records** • Six songs are just the beginning to this album. I was a little disappointed that there weren't more. Although this band is a three piece live, there were many more pieces that made up the full sound of this record, including violin, horns, choirs, laughter, hand claps and even a badminton racket. The tracks have dancy Franz Ferdinand moments that you can't help but move your hips to, layered with Alkaline Trio-esque vocals, especially on the track "89." I hope to hear a lot more from Inspector Owl in the future. (MP)

Instant Camera • *Alive On Departure* • *self-released* • Instant Camera is another sign that pop music trends have finally cycled back and recombined to align with my tastes. The same parts of punk and pop that made The Pixies possible, that spawned the angular marxist disco of Gang of Four, have returned in the form of Instant Camera. Too much hyperbole? Perhaps. Nevertheless, the wonderfully raucous and noisy *Alive On Departure* deserves your attention. Among my favorite tracks are "Terrorvision" and "Style Over Substance Abuse", which has more than its fair share of late '70s British influence. (SJM)

Isle of View • *Gentle Firefly Radio* • **Undecided Records** • Isle of View formed in 2002 in Baltimore, Maryland. Their debut album on Undecided Records, *Gentle Firefly Radio*, is a hook filled masterpiece. The CD is full of melodies and harmonies that will penetrate your head and stay there. The lyrics are easy to relate with and are sung with intensity and emotion. Do not assume it is just a pop punk album though. These boys can rock. (KB)

J Plus J Plus J • *They Hump While We Go Nuts* • **Johann's Face** • This is a tasty electro pop punk album that reminds me of Atom and His Package. The lyrics are a bit silly at times and the music is insanely fun, using a blend of keys, samples and frantic beats. It's hyperactive music for people who like to dance fast. Vocally, the only two members of the band, a guy and girl, share the duties. They have the perfect voices for the cute, fun music they do, often singing/shouting the usually goofy lyrics over their brand of spastic pop. Some may find the music to be a novelty, but those who enjoy this genre of music will find this to be an excellent addition to their collection. (CM)

Jena/Berlin • *Passion Waits As The Program Keeps Going* • **Watch The City Burn** • JB uses a mix of singing and screaming, but they do it in a way that avoids sounding like the played out style so many other bands are currently employing. They mix a more indie rock style with the aggressive screamo moments, creating a greater contrast than the 'popular' punk-hardcore mix I'm so bored with. With a skilled, angular hard rock style, JB delivers pure rock and roll, sacrificing hook-filled pop (faking punk) for more honest, raw intensity. (CM)

Jokaman • *Live and Learn* • **Triad Entertainment** • This release by Jokaman is loosely based on the life he's lived and the lessons he's learned along the way. The opening track is about his family, the street life he's lived through and the fight through it all. Tracks like "Drag'em Outside" stand out, compared to others, with a southern bouncing beat provided with a sincere warning to treat others the way you'd like to be treated. When Joka try's to cater to the clubs and radio, he tends to slip in to the already worn-out styles we hear in the mainstream. Overall, the drama he rhymes about has a true feel to it compared to similar releases by other artists, but it comes off like he's trying too hard to get put on. (JC)

June • *If You Speak Any Faster* • **Victory Records** • If you love Dashboard or any of the other break-through mainstream emo bands like Taking Back Sunday, you've struck gold. It will fit right in your

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music collection with catchy rockers like "Speak Up" and the pop sound appeal of "Elevators Are Matchmakers". There is a definite Jimmy Eat World influence on the straightforward rock song "Scandals and Scoundrels". Any of the bands listed above prove to be safe-ground territory for June. The problem here is they are a little too predictable and careful for their own good. The end product is muzak in large doses. (SP)

Jus Allah • All Fates Have Changed • Babygrande • Jus Allah, the former Jedi Mind Trick member, is back with his debut full length complete with hostile lyrics and a bland rhyme style. Beats are provided by Agallah "The Don Bishop," NME-REK and Slipwax, while appearances on the mic come from GZA/Genius ("Pool of Blood"), Bomshot and Shabazz the Disciple ("Eyes of a Disciple"), Lord Jamar ("Important Shi") and more. On "Tomorrow" Jus spits "The last nigga that I kilt was in the middle of prayer" to begin a song about death that carries the repetitive hook "tomorrow never comes." Though some of these tracks possess a solid sound, a few of the beats are too basic and don't mesh well with the delivery that Jus provides. If you're up for some raps about murder, fully excused by religious beliefs, this may be the release for you. (JC)

Kettcar • Von Spalten Und Tauben, Däcken Und Händen • Grand Hotel Van Cleef • The lead singer of this German band was formerly in an amazing punk rock band called... But Alive. In my attempts to find out what happened to... But Alive, I discovered lead singer Marcus' new band, Kettcar. No longer a punk rocker, Marcus has mellowed out. Kettcar is a solid power pop rock band with the ability to shift more to pop or in the opposite direction towards harder rock. Marcus' vocals are heartfelt and sound great — the mellowing out hasn't prevented him from being a great singer, with the conviction of the German language adding its own bit of impact. The result is a great album, as long as you don't mind that it's all in German. If you can deal with that (and, personally, I love it) then you've got one great rock album to check out. (CM)

Kids Like Us • Outta Control • Eulogy Records • If you know the Eulogy label, you know what you're in for: bustin' up your face hardcore punk here, just like label mates Until the End and Black My Heart. It's aggressive, loud and furious. Just like I like my women. (SH)

Kit! • s/ • Forever Escaping Boredom • Nice record. This female-fronted band offers mid-tempo punky pop brimming with attitude. The hooky, emotional music supports the vocals wonderfully, which are generally delivered in a range of soft melody to a barbaric, yet controlled yell. There are very few vocalists that really know how to do this the right way, and it's always refreshing to hear one. (DP)

Kite Operations • Dandelion Day • K.O.A. Records • The debut CD from this four-piece NYC band was a dose of layered indie rock with unsuspecting turns. This four piece combines beautifully composed emotive melodies comparative to Mineral with harsher, thrashing guitar-driven moments ala Sonic Youth. Classically trained musicians dabble in the world of rock and the result is unique, unconventional and creative. There were Radioheadesque and Bright Eyes moments but, all in all, this album is a breath of fresh air in a whirlwind of generic music. (MP)

KJ Sawka • Synchronized Decompression • Wax Orchard • I stopped listening to drum 'n bass years ago because, frankly, I got bored. KJ Sawka does his best to keep this album interesting, and while he keeps the tempo high, he uses many of the genre's clichés. His saving grace is that the beats are a bit more frenetic than the usual fare. (AL)

La Cedille • Vu Du Large • Chocolate Fireguard Music • If The Roots moved to France and started rapping in French, this is what they would sound like. This French seven-piece plays all live instruments and features two rappers. They have a bunch of funk, soul and jazz in their sound, and their flow is smooth as silk. I only wish

I could understand what they are saying. (AL)

Label the Traitor • The Battle of the Common • Five Point Records • This is the heaviest, fastest hardcore I've heard this time around. Brutal, an all-out aural assault. From beginning to end this is relentless. If you haven't stopped reading by now, go get this. (SH)

Lahar • Provide & Conquer • Spook City Records • I sound like a broken record here, but this Spook City organization is no shit. Here's another bad-ass metalcore group they've got on their label. Lahar is as deadly as anyone else on Spook City. I think I'm making Spook City records my new homepage. Key-rist! (SH)

Last Perfection • Drawing Conclusion's • United Edge Records • It saddens me when I realize that a band hasn't been fully exposed due to incompetent use of funds or a lack thereof. The reason I'm mentioning this is due to the fact that this band would make Ozzfest crap their pants if Ozzfest was only aware that they existed. Juxtaposing infectious guitar scales and melodies with sporadic punk rock chords and brutal breakdowns, this band consists of everything and anything any fan of heavy music can come to enjoy, regardless of what your personal taste of music is. I also noted the vocal style of this band, which consisted of throaty gasps of air, growls, and even monotonous "tough guy" rants, illustrating that they're capable of doing it all. I'm drawing a conclusion that the Last Perfection took into consideration what the fans love and what they would come to love, molded their own specific genre, and perfected it. (CMax)

Latterman • No Matter Where We Go... • Deep Elm Records • If you're looking for a great punk rock album that really focuses on catchiness (with out giving away any intensity) let your ears feast on this. Latterman spits out catchy, hard rocking track and after track, 12 altogether. There are loads of hooks and tempo changes, all delivered with skilled musical precision. Building crescendos, breakdowns, sing-along parts, all come together to create an incredibly infectious album. This is definitely Latterman's best album to date, truly mastering their song-writing ability while continuing to keep their energy levels set at super high. This is for fans of such bands as Strike Anywhere, The Lawrence Arms, and Against Me! (CM)

Lawless Element • Soundvision: In Stereo • Babygrande • With production coming from J. Dilla, Madlib and your own Magnif, the Detroit duo of Lawless Element (also including Griot) has put together a solid album of hip hop music in the vein of Tribe Called Quest and Slum Village. This debut release is a clear example of the progressive sound, and diversity for that matter, that the underground scene has to offer. Not all indie records need to sound low-budget and avant-garde; and considering the contributions throughout this offering, it's no surprise that jazzy, soulful samples are intertwined with thumping beats that are made to ride smoothly alongside each verse. (JC)

Life in Your Way • Ignite and Rebuild • Indianapolis Records • L.I.Y.W. play inspirational hardcore music in the same vein as bands like Overcome and A Taste for Murder. At times this CD gets a little preachy, which isn't entirely a bad thing, but it does take its toll on the listener. All around, this CD sounds great and I enjoyed it, but I can't recommend it to the non-Christian portion of the hardcore scene. (RP)

Lorene Drive • Romantic Wealth • Lobster Records • LD plays outstanding intense rock that is heavy on emotion and extra heavy on aggression. Sometimes crossing from rock to hardcore to metal in one song, the southern California quartet leaves know doubt they are worth attention. The melodies on this album are thick and the tempo changes are frequent. This album is a real treat. This is for fans of such bands as Coheed & Cambria, Emery and Mars Volta — but factor in some extra screamo-core to complete the deal. (CM)

Lozenge • Undone • Sickroom Records • Lozenge's music is like a train wreck waiting to happen. It's sometimes hard to listen when they simply let go of any attempt at structure and improvise a seemingly random set of noises. There are some lyrics, but they don't contribute much. This band is all about they make with their instruments and other items. (AL)

Majik Most • Molesting Hip Hop • Domination Recordings • Giving mad love to the thick asses of the world, Majik Most uses the "Humpty Dance" beat for the "Skinny Girls (Eat Some Food)" offering that gets this sarcastic album underway. The silliness continues on "Deranged Barber" and "Chicks Don't

Mind," but the true standout is the banger "Who What Where When." Even as the Majik Most act begins to get old, appearances by Celp Titled, Louis Logic and the production of J-Zone on the "Extra Thug Sauce" remix, are all a welcomed diversion. A DVD is included with two videos, freestyles and behind the scenes footage of this Florida emcee who must have been a 2 Live Crew fan at some point. (JC)

Maker • Shooting The Breeze • Galapagos • Shooting The Breeze is Maker's first instrumental hip hop album. It reminded me of DJ Shadow, as he combines groovy beats with smooth piano samples and other sounds. He uses clips from various genres, deftly stringing them together to create one track. (AL)

Malkovich Music • Skeletons • self-released • Malkovich is a hip-hop head that grew up throughout the Middle East, Mediterranean, North Africa and Europe before landing in Los Angeles. He offers up a voice that speaks from a unique angle about an immigrant's journey to a world of more problems, with a rhyme style that is sharp and precise. Malkovich flows with a steady delivery overtop a mixture of indie beats and progressive sounds. Get out your headphones and pay attention to the stories he has to tell. Having been in the underground scene for some time now, you can here more of Malko on releases from Gershwin BLX and the Halifax All-Stars. (JC)

Man Alive • Open Surgery • The Militia Group • Man Alive formed in 1999 in Jerusalem, Israel. After a lot of overseas interest and touring, they got together with producer, Ed Rose (Get Up Kids, Motion City Soundtrack) and recorded *Open Surgery*. The CD features twelve punk influenced, rock songs. The album is fast paced and high energy, with enough catchy parts to give it that sing along quality. (KB)

Maritime • Glass Floor • Desoto Records • The elegantly flowing first track "The Window is the Door" brings together the likes of Death Cab and Gloria Record. I hear Death Cab in the vocals, whereas through the acoustic guitar do I feel the Gloria Record influence. The "Sleep Around" bass line is reminiscent of Green Day's "Longview". It's Cranberries meets Michael Penn with male vocals. This is basically borderline adult contemporary pop rock, but not in a Richard Marx type way. It has more of an indie feel to it. Listening to the fourth track "King of Doves" really reminds me of a cross between Michael Penn and Tears for Fears. And that is an awesome combination. (SP)

Meneguar • I Was Born at Night • Magic Bullet Records • What you've got here is your basic indie-garage rock ditty. Although "A Few Minutes An Hour" is an absolutely haunting emo rock nugget. For the most part they rock out though. And it's all good. (SH)

Messer Chups • Crazy Price • Ipecac Recordings • Even though these Soviets/Germans play music with rockabilly elements, they are not a rockabilly band. Same goes for surf rock. They simply play a combination of the two, with sci-fi references and some 60's and 70's influences. Sometimes the sounds become a bit repetitive when they show up in more than a couple of places. (AL)

Million Dollar Mouth • Say My Name... Now Say It Again • self-released • MDM releases a solid 11-song disc here, mostly in the rock/alt vein. They sound somewhere caught between Stone Temple Pilots and My Chemical Romance, but there's too much ground in between. Then when they get into "Give It Up," which sounds like Maroon 5's next hit, I have no idea where they're going. Mike Biscotti's vocals throw an interesting curve as he is reminiscent of Iggy with a Morrison vibe. It's not bad by any means but I think they can really turn heads if they commit to a sound and stick to it. (SH)

Minamina Goodsong • The Four Farmer Circus • Arc The Finger • This Atlanta foursome returns with *The Four Farmer Circus*, another diversely funktified version of hip-hop that offers the chance to step out of the normal realm of life and into the minds of a traveling circus act. Each member, DJ T'Challa, Adahma AD, Twain and Pgnut the Prehistoric, find their inner alter superheroes and create a fun collection of songs with comical skits that add the extra depth to the concept found within. The beats are still inspired by the old-school legends that paved the way to the hip-hop growth of the early nineties, resulting in a solid offering no matter what mood you find yourself in. (JC)

Mischief • Brew • Smash the Windows • Fistol Records • "The Reinvention of the Printing Press" really annoys me right off the bat with the vocals. Both forced and unnecessary, the vocals stand out in a bad way. The flirtation of Spanish guitars in the intro of "Citizen Drive" is a nice touch, but it's ruined by the entrance of yet another out of touch vocal track. This track has almost as a Faith No More "Das Schutzenfest" feel to it. Honestly, I can't get past the vocals. They are horrendous and I wish you luck giving it a listen. (SP)

Modern Giant • Satellite Nights • Popboomerang Records • This Australian band brings us a classic pop album from beginning to end. Male and female harmonies are beautifully intertwined. Lyrically, it's all down the romantic road. There is even some spoken word. Diverse, creative indie pop with a taste here and there of rock. This is what JeJuno would have sounded like if someone beat the rock out of them. (MP)



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Monarchs • self-titled • Pop Faction Records • METAL! And not just metal - I'm talking about slow, brooding, angry metalcore. Brutal double kick drums, huge riffs and guttural screams. If you dig Down and Superjoint Ritual, this is your next purchase. (SH)

Mutant Radio • Cash n Burn • self-released • I was wondering when I'd hear this. I can say in all my years of reviewing that I've never heard an indie band go after the rock-funk-rap crowd. Mutant Radio scratches and weaves between the Chili Peppers and Linkin Park in the first few cuts, and then they get mellow-funky, a la Jamiroquai on the latter half of the CD. (SH)

Nerve Gas Tragedy • Written in the Blood of the Dead • Spook City Records • If you can't guess this review from the title of the band and the disc, you shouldn't even be reading this magazine. This is intense, kids. Heavy, fast, loud and angry. Hardcore to the n'th degree. (SH)

No Use for a Name • Keep Them Confused • Fat Wreck Chords • No Use for a Name has been around for years. But they continue to crank out great albums. The band varies the song tempos throughout the CD. There are fast and catchy songs that make you want to get up and move. There are also slower paced songs that give the album some diversity. I love the lyrics and vocal styling of Tony Sly. I even got a little teary eyed when reading the lyrics to *Killing Time*. I can definitely see this album getting heavy rotation in my CD player. (KB)

Nob Dylan and his Nobsoletes • Positively 12 Stiff Dylans • Alternative Tentacles Records • Chances are that if you are a punk rock fan, then you are not necessarily a fan of Bob Dylan. You might know his more popular songs, but not his entire catalog. For you, this album will simply be a collection of hard-charging garage rock songs. For those hardcore Dylan fans, this may amuse you or offend you. These 12 obscure Dylan tracks are reinterpreted so as to bear little resemblance to their originals. (AL)

Novemberkills • Russian Roulette • Hotfoot Records • This is the sophomore release from Novemberkills. It is a melodic masterpiece with punk, emo, and hardcore influences. The songs are catchy and the lyrics are easy to relate and sing along to. It was one of the few CDs that grabbed my interest right away. The album as a whole is beautiful, yet has powerful breakdowns that give the band its own sound. Let the CD keep running when the music stops and there will be an extra, funny surprise waiting just for you. (KB)

Old Time Relijun • 2012 • K Records • Pushing the envelope even further from their *Lost Light* release, the trio of Old Time Relijun purposely melds off-key sounds from all angles on 2012. Like a free-jazz band that has eaten way too much acid; the horns, bass guitars, irritating guitar chords and thumping percussion, take you to the fields of Woodstock, then through the sweaty punk bars of the genres heyday, and back to the intricate mind-fuck that eats at you through every vocal delivered. (JC)

Olli Schulz & der Hund Marie • Das beige Album • Grand Hotel Van Cleef • This is exquisite German indie pop, with well-crafted, simple tunes that capitalize on excellent, passionate vocals and melodic, layered music. I don't speak or understand a bit of German. But, I love how the language sounds and that really works to my advantage with these guys. It's all in German and the vocals are outstanding. Meanwhile, the instrumentation is exceptional, using harmonic keys, jangly guitars and a varied pace, from mellow to mid-tempo. If you're looking for a pure, no frills indie pop rock album, you have no further to go than Germany's Olli Schulz & der Hund Marie. (CM)

Omega One • The Lo-Fi Chronicles • Nature Sounds • Omega One has collaborated and made beats for Aesop Rock, Blackhead, and many others, but this time he goes it alone. This collection of mostly instrumental tracks showcase his talents as a producer without having the MC get in the way. Most of the time the tracks are decent, but not spectacular. Indeed, it is the tracks that feature I Self Devine and LoDeck on the mic that excel. (AL)

Omission • Refuse Regress • Reflections Words Music • It's hard. It's heavy. It's good. This is hardcore the way hardcore should be. It is powerful and driving, but not completely obsessed with maniacal screaming and the 'everything louder than everything else' mentality. This is a good disc. (MK)

Orion • The Sound And The Fury • Hotfoot Records • Have you ever seen those Victory Records advertisements? It shows two big names such as Thursday and Taking Back Sunday and then it shows the new up and coming act that is supposed to fill the new "legendary slot." They're corny, however, Orion will soon be the new feature. Imagine the raw emotion and intensity of such acts as Saeon and Circa Survive and combine that with additional power pop and the sporadic "all hell breaks loose on the dance floor" breakdown and you've come into the realm of what Orion sounds like. Regardless of my inadequate description, this band is very good. They're raw, they're intense, and they're talented. (CMAX)

Our Turn • Catch Your Breath • Youngblood Records • Since Hatebreed, Comeback Kid, and With Honor started gaining national exposure it seems the new breed of hardcore is focused on the

"straight ahead" version in order to achieve such a stature as these "big" bands who have paved the way. Regardless, some bands are doing well and Our Turn is a crucial example. Our Turn are post-core, straight ahead rockers who are full of boisterous claims on peace, self-respect, hope, and compromise set over a brand of infectious chords, choruses, and chants. It's Our Turn's turn to make a change and to make their mark. Once they're finished, bands such as Champion, Righteous Jams, and Blacklisted will have to catch their breath. (CMAX)

Outerlimitz • Suicide Prevention • Galapagos 4 • This hip-hop album starts with a head-nodding tune that is mesmerizing. The next track continues with the infectious loops, but the pace quickens and the listener is taken for a ride. From there, the journey continues. The use of repetitive keyboard and sample loops is done to perfection, really hooking you in to the vibe of each track. When a track ends, I'm anxious for what the next cut has to offer. I'm never disappointed. Each new cut delivers a tweaked sound that maintains a style that is all theirs. This is a perfect album for bouncing to on your way out for the night. (CM)

Oxes • EP • Monitor Records • This is Oxes's first album since 2002, and it is finally here. Their music is too hard to be called math rock, but possesses some of the genre's unpredictability. There are no vocals either, unless you count one or two screams that are buried in the background. They play a bit on the sloppy side, and inject a bit of Southern Rock into the mix, if that is even possible. The last track seems a bit out of place, with a danceable (gasp!) disco-esque beat. (AL)

Palma International • Float Like a Butterfly • Asian Man Records • Nice. Mellow. Hip. Dub. PI plays ska and soulful rocksteady, a la Madness. In fact, Lee Thompson does a guest spot on this 12-song CD. Turn this on late at night and drift away. (SH)

Past Mistakes • The Purgatory LP • The New Beat • The music on this CD is outstanding. Past Mistakes plays catchy, smart indie rock with some more angular aspects. The tempo changes are precise and frequent, keeping the energy alive and never boring the listener. They remind me of old Applesed Cast, using frantic song structures that maintain a melody, yet still have an aggressive, intense energy at all times. But the vocalist reminds me of Kermit the Frog. No disrespect, but this band would be more enjoyable as an instrumental outfit or by replacing their singer. (CM)

PatientZero • Seemingly So... • self-released • Most songs have a point or some sort of distinct melody they leave the listener with. This is clearly not the case with "And Sold..." the second track off Patient Zero's new album. The name of the band is cool, but I assure you the music is not. The vocals are a cross between The Toadies and that awful band Lifesize. "Di-rect-ion-al-i-ty" is even less memorable than "And Sold..." if that's possible. What a clever move to break the song title into individual syllables. Stay away. (SP)

Piglet • Lava Land • Team AV • Chicago's Piglet shows off their tightly honed musical skills on *Lava Land*, which features six tracks of unadulterated instrumental glory. Their style is highly intricate, leaning towards math rock in a cross between Don Caballero's oomph and Storm and Stress's sense of experimentation. (AL)

Pink Lincolns • No Lo Siento • Hazzard • If one were to write a tome on the history of punk rock, the Pink Lincolns would definitely need to be in the index, and perhaps have their own chapter. These snotty, in-your-face punk rockers have been around since 1988, and have a tremendous body of work. They keep it real on this, their sixth full-length release, serving dose after dose of high-energy power punk with a knuckle sandwich on the side. (DP)

Psychokinetics • Seven League Boots • self released • In the Bay Area underground scene since 1995, DJ Denizen, and emcees Celsius 7 and Spidey, provide what they describe as "banger" beats and positive music" on this release. Though there are a few low points, such as the many directions your pulled in, a handful of tracks make an impression here. Maybe it's all about what mood you're in, because the sounds on this Psychokinetics release are carried by hip hop influenced beats, each with a distinctive influence, along with mostly average rhyme styles. The opening track sounds like something you'd hear at a roller skating rink, "Bigtime" has a heavy reggae/jungle vibe,

and "Approach" will appeal to the classic rock fan with an AC/DC loop in it. Their appreciation for the history of music is evident in their samples, if not in songs like "C'Mon." Other standouts include "Badlands," "Stop It" and "Mr. Leggs." (JC)

Quantice Never Crashed • self-titled • The Death Scene • The name sparks interest regardless of the genre and, trust me, the music itself is as interesting as the name. Music is simply a form of art, and QNC demonstrates that with this 10-song disc of utter euphoria. Intertwining abstract guitar hooks with breakdowns, blast beats, and jazz configurations (to name a few). QNC is on the prowl to truly recreate what music is and what music is meant to be. Slightly redundant and cathartic, along with the occasional out of place transition "break down to punk rock beat," QNC is still a talented band and eccentric at that. In comparison with what's currently being released, what more could you ask for? (CMAX)

Racebannon • First There Was The Emptiness • Secretly Canadian • What the hell are these guys doing on Secretly Canadian??? Their insane noise-rock clashes mightily with the label's usually toned-down material. There's just something about Racebannon's insanity that is hard to resist. This is a re-release of their full length debut album, back when they had two vocalists who sound like they were competing to see who could tear out their vocal chords first. It also includes two live bonus tracks. (AL)

Radar Bros. • The Fallen Leaf Pages • Merge Records • This handsomely recorded album contains several subdued, somewhat dusty gems, delivered with a wounded, but tryin' dammit vocal. The Beatles-esque quality to the songs is obvious, but really beside the point, because imitation or worship is really not on the agenda of this saddest. The sleepy, melancholy constructions are poignant, as particularly exemplified in "Papiilon" and "Breathing Again". The only weakness of the album is that it is a bit repetitive from song to song, but for late night ruminations, this is not a liability. (SJM)

Repercussion • And The Winner Is... • Spook City Records • I was ecstatic to see that the ex-singer of Shattered Realm had formed a new band, yet I was disappointed in the results. I'm in no way stating that "tough guy hardcore" is talentless, I'm only stating that redundancy is a pet peeve and a repetition of the same riff on a listener can lead to a minor case of insanity. Regardless, the album opens up with a breakdown thus illustrating what is to come, and it comes, over and over again. Fans of Hatebreed, Until The End, and Most Precious Blood take a gander at Repercussion, they're everything you've come to love and everything concerned within the definition of "brutal." (CMAX)

Rod Lee • Vol. 5: The Official • Club King/Morphius Urban • immediately catching, the hyper beats and rhythmic bouncing of the samples go from erotic to hostile without missing a dance floor grind. This high-energy mix (30 tracks) is sure to bring the club home, or to wherever you're heading afterwards. But don't expect a bunch of fluff here, Lee manages to speak through these tracks, in a way that you feel the tension, the pain and the channels they go through. Can't get enough samples of today's top 40 rap artists? Rod Lee makes it all bearable over the top of bass heavy beats and enough rally cries to recite 'til morning. (JC)

Rufio • The Comfort of Home • Nitro Records • I have been listening to this band since their debut album in 2001, *Perhaps, I Suppose*. So I was looking forward to this release. It stays in true fashion with previous Rufio releases. The songs are perfectly sculpted pop punk. The band has always had its own sound though. The singer's voice is very recognizable and it is put over some of the catchiest hooks out there. This is one of those bands that you cannot help but like. (KB)

Scary Kids Scaring Kids • The City Sleeps In Flames • Immortal Records • These guys are definitely going to be the next big popcore



☆ quickies...a little bit on a lot of records ☆

band to make it big amongst all the Hot Topic underground kids. S.K.S.K. plays highly-marketable emopopcore that sounds like a cross between My Chemical Romance and Armor Sleep with a dash of metal. Despite all my disparaging comments, I really did enjoy this CD. (RP)

Schoolyard Heroes • *Fantastic Wounds* • Control Group • Holy Shit! I love this! This is totally wild and screamy and tight and fun and exciting and wow. Female vocals that range from screaming panic to melodic epic rock opera. The music is tight and slightly reminiscent of Nuclear Rabbit or Eskimo. Maybe some song titles will entice you? "The Girl Who Was Born Without A Face", "Battlestar Anorexia", "Serial Killers Know How To Party". Starting to appreciate the love here? (MK)

Screaching Weasel • *Anthem for a New Tomorrow* • Asian Man Records • The re-issues continue for SW. This is their fifth full-length album that came out in 1993 and is gloriously available again thanks to Asian Man Records (along with all their other albums). The band says this is their fav album and it's definitely up there for me. (Although I still drool over *My Brain Hurts*.) Regardless, this is certainly one of their best, with fuzzed out guitars, Ben's trademark nasally vocals and a pop-punk pace that keeps things right on time. Catchy? Need you ask? SW is the king of catchy and this album is no exception. For those unfamiliar with the legacy that is SW, it's genius pop punk with nods to The Ramones, Green Day and The Descendents. (CM)

Screaching Weasel • *How To Make Enemies & Irritate People* • Asian Man Records • Continuing in their SW series of re-releases, Asian Man Records offers the latest installment. It sounds great and any SW fan needs to grab this (and the other re-releases) to keep their collection complete. However, this album isn't the band's best and around this time (1994) I started to tire a bit of their sound. While they are excellent at their brand of catchy pop punk with amazing, angular guitar solos, Ben's vocals start to irritate me (so maybe the album title is more literal than I realized) and their songs all began to run together. Don't let that sway you; it's still quite good. The 13-track album is full of super catchy, sometimes snotty, pop punk tunes that will make you dance and sing along. (CM)

Screaching Weasel • *Kill The Musicians* • Asian Man Records • This completes the Asian Man series of SW re-releases. It's a fine note to end on. This 1995 release includes rare seven-inch songs, tunes from split releases and compilation tracks. This is a must for any true SW fan. The 31 tracks chronicle SW's amazing pop punk career and only solidifies their places as one of the best of the genre. Remastered for your listening pleasure and including liner notes with a "History of..." from Ben Weasel himself, you're a fool if you don't add this to your punk rock collection. (CM)

Send More Paramedics • *The Hallowed And The Heathen* • In At The Deep End Records • The second track "Boker" screams the likes of old school Pantera, but this sound is easily lost with the annoying punk lead vocals that ruin the rest of the song and the album for that matter. By the third song "Desert of Skulls", you will be convinced this band has an extremely limited sound and an awful singer. They even have a song called "No Fucking Joke". I'm going to leave that one alone, but only say that it sounds almost exactly like every other track I already listed. (SP)

Setting Sun • *Math And Magic* • Young Love Records • Simple, but intense and melodic indie rock make up this nine track album. The vocals are somewhere between Hum and Elliot Smith, but the lyrics aren't quite as good as either. The bouncy melodies will make your toes tap, but there's enough edge to sway far from the pop scene. They've taken that early '90s Dinosaur Jr. sound and incorporated some emotive melodies, and even some dance rock. It kind of made me feel like I was 15 again and listening to a new Sub Pop band. (MP)

Seventeen Evergreen • *Life Embarrasses Me On Planet Earth* • Pacific Radio Fire Records • These guys reminded me of Air's first album, but with fewer spacey sounds. It is soft and non-threatening, with touches of '70s retro all over the place, which brought Pink Floyd to mind. They're not going to rock your world, but instead will lull you into a comfortable state of mind. (AL)

Shook Ones • *Sixteen* • Endwell • Shook Ones remind me of Lifetime. The somewhat screamed vocals are belted over fast-paced punk rock that is loaded with both melody and intensity. It's the rapid pace, the aural assault that is so reminiscent of Lifetime. Musically, Shook Ones are more developed, creative and intricate, mixing up their tempos and blending a variety of sounds. Fans of fast, hard punk rock will drool all over this 12-track masterpiece. (CM)

Shots Fired • self-titled • self-released • Shots Fired is not short on intensity. They use thick chord progressions, aggressive drumming and outstanding vocals to power home their rock message. While Shots Fired is committed to rocking out, they also deliver on melody, using tempo changes to shift from full-throttle rock to catchier moments. It's a blend that never sacrifices one for the other, allowing the potency of the rock to mix seamlessly with the hooks. You'll be sucked in before you get to track two. This is for fans of such bands as Fugazi, Errortype:11, Quicksand and Pilot To Gunner. (CM)

Silverstein • *Discovering the Waterfront* • Victory Records • There

are a lot of bands that are mixing elements of hardcore, emo, and punk with melodic vocals, but Silverstein is one of the only ones I like. The litmus test for these bands is to try to hum any of their songs an hour after listening, and these Canadians passed. The melodies are actually good, and the sporadic screaming keeps things bouncing, along with some kickass music. (AL)

Slobot • *Slobot vs. the Minotaur* • Uterine Fury Records • This CD/DVD combo contains the short film *Slobot vs. the Minotaur*, which is pretty much self-explanatory. The film sees Slobot travel to fight said creature in a film with the smallest of production values. The CD includes the soundtrack to the film, which, if you've ever heard Slobot's music before, you know is weird. The songs are more like sound collages than actual songs. Also included in the DVD are a few other films from Slobot's past, including some funny action-figure films. (AL)

So They Say • self-titled • Fearless Records • This St. Louis, Missouri band has all the right elements. All the members quit their other bands and jobs in order to focus more on So They Say. There is your dedication. Musically, the songs on the EP are perfectly blended with elements of punk, rock, and even some hardcore. The lyrics help round out these catchy, but not sickeningly, fun tracks. My only major complaint is that being an EP, there are only six songs. But I guess that is their final element: Always leave the listener wanting more. (KB)

Some Girls • *The DNA Will Have Its Say* • Three One G • This album is all of six minutes long and what an amazing six minutes it is. Some Girls are a kind of super group featuring members of The Locust, The Plot to Blow up the Eiffel Tower and Swing Kids. Having said that, one can only imagine what would become of the joining of these forces. Well here it is, a six-minute hell ride of emotions and pure fury. I can't even begin to think of what this band could do in 30 minutes. (RP)

Some Water And Sun • *All My Friends Have To Go* • Hefty Records • It's too bad I don't know Japanese, because many of the lyrics to this quirky album are in that language. This duo creates music that reminded me of Prefuse 73 at times, with cut up vocal samples and catchy beats. This is an electronic record with elements of pop and R&B that goes down easy. (AL)

Somerset • *Pandora* • PunkNews Records • Somerset was the first band asked to be on PunkNews.org's new record label, PunkNews Records. That being said, talent is an obvious trait of this band. There are nine brand new songs on this CD and the other three are reworked versions from older demos. Their music is melodic rock with punk influences. The songs are full of hooks and sound very solid. (KB)

Stars Are Falling/Skylines • split series vol. 1 • Blood and Ink • The first half of this split CD is a band called Stars Are Falling. Having a name like that one can only expect emote. S.A.F. are one of those bands that has two singers, one tough and one in touch with his more feminine side. As for the Skyline half of this split, you still get the two singers, only this time the music is a little chuggier. Nothing too groundbreaking here, just your average hardcore split release. (RP)

State of Revolution • *Fight Forever* • SOS Records • Solid punk rock here. Sometimes they rock out, sometimes they get a little retro-'80s punk with it. Good, good stuff. (SH)

Stockyard Stoics • self-titled • Jump Start Records • The songs on this album were all recorded by the Stockyard Stoics in 2000 and 2001. The lyrics focus mainly on life and trying to survive, though the band does get political in a couple of songs. Their music is more old school style punk rock. The songs are played loud, fast, and with a gritty sounding singer leading the way. (KB)

Stray From The Path • self-titled • Five Point Records • This five-piece makes a respectable attempt at the progressive brand of math core that is sweeping the nation by storm. This band stray's from such acts as Fear Before The March of Flames, The Chariot, Norma Jean, and The Red Chord due to incompetence. The music is cathartic with no melody and anything to grab onto, a "hooker," figuratively. The breakdowns are exceptional, however they're frequent throughout all 11 tracks. Ironically this is a "verse chorus verse" math band. A very genuine and sincere attempt at the genre and I tip my hat to them. However, it will take some practice to live down their name. (CMAX)

Street Dogs • *Back to the World* • Brass Tacks Records • This is the second album from the Street Dogs. The band features ex-members of other punk rock bands such as the Dropkick Murphys and the Mighty Mighty Bosstones. The Street Dogs tried to incorporate messages into their music by writing lyrics that came straight from the life experiences of the band members. The songs on this album are catchy, punk rock and make the listener want to sing and chant along. (KB)

Summer Blanket • *Whisper Louder* • Pop Up Records • This is melodic pop rock on the soft tip. The acoustically driven "Connecticut" never quite peaks throughout the course of the song. I kept waiting for an intense moment, but nothing. Other than a little U2 in the bass, I was ready too soon for the next track. The irresistible chime of "Sydney" grabbed me for a sec and then gone due to lack

of chorus. These songs are flatliners. (SP)

Sybris • self-titled • Flameshovel • This is music for the considerably unsettled, or for anyone who likes to take a trip outside of psychological stability for an hour. With an eerie intro and a slam of hard distortion at crucial times, this power rock five-piece offers sounds that have an unfinished quality to them, as though they are still waiting to collect what they are owed in this life. But isn't everyone? It appeals to that yearning in all of us to climb higher, to drive ourselves out of this wasteland. Wonderful use of Edie Brickell-type vocals and electronic ambience to salt and pepper the sound. (DP)

Ten 33 • *Nightmare on Grace Street* • Blood and Ink Records • Imagine a modern day Suicidal Tendencies with a twist of Phil from Pantera's screaming edge to it. This is at least how I would describe "It Never Dies", the first track off Ten 33's new album. This hardcore punk band rocks out with titles such as "March on Castle Greyskull" for all you He-Man fans and "Jerry's Kids" for all you sickos. The distorted bass in "Jerry's Kids" has a calming effect until the redundant touch of the lead vocals comes in bringing the same formula used in most of the previously mentioned tracks. Good in small doses. (SP)

The Agitators • *Salute to All* • SOS Records • If you walked into a bar on St. Patty's day and there was a punk band playing, this would be what you heard. This is fun, catchy, Oi! punk. If you listen to this and aren't instantly driven to open a beer and call your friends over, you're not hooked up right. (SH)

The Bloodiest Night of My Life • *An Agony in Eight Fits* • The New Beat • When I listen to this CD I picture a bunch of kids trying to be artsy but missing the mark at every turn. I'm not really sure where these guys went wrong. They have all the right hair cuts and have seen The Locust and Blood Brothers play more than twice. Not saying this is a horrible band, it just seems like they are trying to ride the wave of so many other artcore bands. I'm eager to hear this band in a few years when they have finally found their niche. (RP)

The Bomb • *Indecision* • Thick Records • Featuring Jeff Pezzati (ex-Naked Raygun) on vocals, The Bomb play melodic rock that has some punk influences. J. Robbins recorded the 12-track album, so it sounds excellent. Musically, this doesn't really blow me away. It's solid, tight material, but there's nothing about it that sets it apart. It's good rock and roll, certainly is catchy, but it lacks intensity and originality, two things that are becoming harder and harder to find in bands. I will say, though, Jeff's vocals are awesome and make me miss Naked Raygun. (CM)

The Carpettes • self-titled • NDN Records • The opener "Nothing At All" contains a standard run-of-the-mill guitar chord progression that shows little to no originality for this Clashy British sounding band. The lead singer seems desperate to rhyme every other lyric line. "Steal Your Thunder" sounds like a Ramones' riff I've heard somewhere before. This is mainly in the verse vocals where I hear it so strongly. This vibe continues throughout the album especially on "I Don't Like You". If you love The Clash and Ramones, give it a shot. (SP)

The Chicharones • *When Pigs Fly* • Camobear Records • The great cartoon artwork on the cover threw me off the trail of the genre. I never thought it would be hip-hop, let alone incredibly solid, creative and infectious. There are tracks on here that are soulful, others are more jazzy and some are just straight up, beat-driven banger cuts. Some songs have a live instrument feel, with guitar riffs and drum beats that make me feel like they're playing right in front of me. The attitude ranges from playful to aggressive, but a constant remains: they do everything with skill. This is for fans of Blackalicious, Beastie Boys, Jurassic 5, and Eminem. Why Eminem? These guys have an ability to flow with a pointed accuracy, something Eminem excels at. While musically they aren't too similar, I think there is definitely a vocal similarity at times. Fans of creative, indie hip-hop must give this a spin. (CM)

The Crest • *Skeptik* • Uprising • Madison, Wisc. has put themselves on the hip-hop make without question, thanks to The Crest. Around since 1998, this appears to be their debut album—but Madison hip-hop heads have known about these cats for a while. Politically-aware, musically-gifted and skilled to start a party or keep the club bouncing, The Crest deliver on all points with this 18-track release. The lyrical flow is fast, athletic, doing words gymnastics that are as good as Eminem or Bustriever or Atmosphere, flipping between two MCs, both skilled to rip the mic. They tear it up over a variety of beats, samples and loops, some slugging along with a haunting feel, others bangering forth an urgent, unavoidable intensity. These are head-nodding tunes that any fan of hip-hop will find exceptional. (CM)

The Cubby Creatures • *After the Deprogramming* • Rodent • Attacking social consciousness on all fronts, this album is only a representation of Cubby's music arm. They have also run a zine and a cable access show, and here put their considerable talent to work on a new full-length. They are from the San Francisco alt-rock scene, but their challenging music has what seem like Irish sensibilities, but use spacey morphs to produce a new sound rife with fantasy and futuristic invention. Great pop rock. (DP)

The Divining • *Reprisal* • Dressed to Kill Records • Metalcore! Brutal,

☆ quickies...a little bit on a lot of records ☆

wrenching, metalcore here. There's some ferocious and extremely technical guitar work on this disc. This is a sonic mind-blower. (SH)

The Duane Peters Gunfight • *self-titled* • **Disaster Records** • Duane Peters, of skateboarding and U.S. Bombs fame, has come back with yet another bunch of rough and tough songs. The album is strong and brutally honest punk rock. One song, *Yer To Sensitive*, actually takes a shot at all the "emo" punk bands that are popular today. While the CD does have some fun and almost catchy songs, it is a bit raw for my liking. It is definitely aimed at more old school punk rock fans. (KB)

The End of the Universe • *You're The Disease* • **Chainsaw Safety Records** • The End of the Universe features former members of Converge, Jesuit and Channel. That alone sets the bar pretty high as for expectations they have set for themselves. This being their first release I would have to say these guys have definitely met and exceeded all expectations anyone could put on them. This CD is destined to be this year's best metal album. If you have never heard this band, I strongly recommend you pick up this CD. You will not be disappointed. (RP)

The Fall of Troy • *Doppelgänger* • **Equal Vision Records** • This album starts out with one of the most complicated guitar lines I have heard in a while. Sure, their mix of rock, metal, punk and hardcore has been done a million times, but you can tell these guys are hungry. They catch you off guard often, changing tempos and time signatures, sometimes mid-song. The most amazing thing about this group is that it only has three members, and they are all 19 years old. If you like The Mars Volta, you'll probably like this. (AL)

The Fallout Project • *Hopes & Ropes* • **Dare To Care Records** • There are bands that take hardcore and take it to new levels, only using it as a starting point. Much like Neurosis, The Fallout Project is such a band, expanding the genre's boundaries with six tracks of heavy music that combines screamed vocals with aggressive music that is at times unsettling, and at other times hypnotic. (AL)

The Fenwicks • *Truth & Memory* • *self-released* • Oh great, here we go again...ANOTHER Afro-Celtic Yiddish ska band. Wait a second...WHAT?! Yiddish who? Yeah, you read me. This is a live disc and you know how catchy ska is live so you're probably buying this already. If not, got! This is as catchy as anything Fishbone ever did. It's absolutely a blast! (SH)

The Finale • *Things Can Still Get Better* • **Creep Records** • The Finale is a young band based out of Pennsylvania. The members have stated that their influences range from Huey Lewis and the News to Taking Back Sunday. Most of the songs seem like they could be passed off as just pop punk, boy wants girl drama. But in actuality, the lyrics are well thought out and very easy to relate to. The fusion of rock, pop, and punk into their music, mixed with the emotionally charged lyrics, makes this album one that you cannot help but like. (KB)

The Fugue • *Mysterious Animals* • **RiYL Records** • This is noise punk. Is that even a category? Is now, bitchies! You know how they say the lead singer of The Used puked on stage because he screams so much? I'm pretty sure he got that from The Fugue. While I can't confirm anyone from The Fugue puked on stage, I'm willing to bet. \$5. Who wants action? (SH)

The Hatepinks • *Plastic Bag Ambitions* • **TKO Records** • The Hatepinks formed in France in 2003. The band has an old school, garage punk band sound to it. The songs are catchy and seem perfect for singing and chanting along. My only complaint is the time. The whole album is under seventeen minutes long. I feel if a band is going to make a CD, give the consumer enough music to at least satisfy them for a half hour. In this case, the repeat button will just have to do. (KB)

The Holy Mountain • *Entrails* • **No Idea Records** • Socio-political hardcore here. Blistering, brutal, intense, etc. That might be the most intense opening to a CD I've heard in ages. How can three people create such musical violence? There are 11 tracks to remind you. (SH)

The January Taxi • *Keep Quiet, They Might Hear Us* • **Vacant Cage Records** • Blending aggression with an indie rock goodness, The January Taxi drop eight tracks on this 25-minute release. Some songs are uptempo, hard rocking tunes while a couple are more restrained, jangly heartfelt pieces. The lead vocals are strong and harmonize with the music very well. This is catchy rock with enough emotion and energy to keep even picky listeners entertained. (CM)

The Junior Varsity • *Wide Eyed* • **Victory Records** • The Junior Varsity have made it through some bad luck and have a great album to show for it. Through numerous van break ins, the band has pulled together and produced an album that is just enough parts rock, punk, and pop fused together to hook just about any listener. In some songs, their sound is reminiscent of the band Park. The album, as a whole, is very solid with intricate guitar parts and smooth vocals. Songs that stood out were "Do You Mind?" and "If It Hurts You." (KB)

The Kalilikak Family • *May 23rd 2007* • **Tell All Records** • It takes commitment to get through this album. It is an experiment in sound collages, random drumming, and all kinds of electronic sound ef-

fects thrown together. There are also touches of folk music and some IDM. (AL)

The Know How • *Now in Technicolor* • **Stomp** • A deliciously great new ska act, the Know How power out some really hard, poppy tunes that instantly resonate with the listener. You know that this is something different immediately when you hear the incorporation of some spacey synths in tandem with more traditional ska/raspy Dropkick-Murphys-style vocals. It will rock even the most discriminating ska-loving ass, and I'm sure they own the stage when they're live. (DP)

The Lawrence Arms • *Cocktails & Dreams* • **Asian Man Records** • Any material from The Lawrence Arms in cause to rejoice in my mind. While this isn't a new album, it is an awesome collection of tracks from an out-of-print release, a new song, two new recordings of old songs and much more. The fact is, hearing the same LA songs over and over again is better than hearing new material from 99 percent of the other bands out there. LA plays sincere, aggressive, melodic punk rock that calls to mind Jawbreaker, Strike Anywhere, Fifteen and Alkaline Trio. There are two vocalists, one gruff and aggressive while the other is a bit more "sensitive." The energy that LA puts forth is much bigger than one would expect from a three-piece, and their passionate style of music is irresistible. Lyrically, these guys are honest, intense and eloquent, mixing personal stories with socio/political commentary. There aren't many bands that sound like they care about their music; The Lawrence Arms is one of the few I know of. (CM)

The Letters Organize • *Dead Rhythm Machine* • **Nitro Records** • This really aggressive, really kick-ass punk rock. It's not punkcore, i.e. they never just shit themselves and go completely out of control, but they come damn close. I really, really dig this. Fans of everyone from Velvet Revolver to My Chemical Romance to the Sex Pistols will dig this. (SH)

The Lurkers • *26 Years* • **SOS Records** • Has it really been 26 years? Who the hell knows? This is great punky pop rock that you will want to play at every party you throw from now on and forever. Amen. Reminiscent of Sloppy Seconds, The Ramones and The Clash, this is good punk. It appears that it has been 26 years, as most of these songs seem to have been written in the late '70s. Timeless stuff, baby. (MK)

The Numb Ones • *Everything in Between* • **Cleopatra Records** • This album has a sticker on the front stating "A must for fans of Foo Fighters and Velvet Revolver". On "Everything in Between" I can definitely hear Foo Fighters and maybe a little Guns and Roses, but the second song I don't think so at all. If anything it crosses into the '80s head on. And although the second track "Space and Time" is inconsistent with the first track, it still is catchy enough to have a video that would be playing solely on VH-1. The album is produced by Fred Coury of Cinderella. Which one is he again? A must for radio-friendly types. (SP)

The Number 12 Looks Like You • *Nuclear. Sad. Nuclear.* • **EyeBall Records** • As the world of hardcore music becomes one mediocre mass of like-sounding crap, bands are doing what they can to stand out from the crowd. While the screamo vocals have been done over and over, the music itself is pretty good. Time and signature changes abound, and they are not afraid to throw in some acoustic guitars here and there. They tend to be more technical than a lot of other bands. (AL)

The Occasion • *Cannery Hours* • **Say Hey Records** • The Occasion sounds like a less perfectly produced, more intentionally dirty invocation of the more subdued side of 70's adult contemporary, with a little "Here Come The Warm Jets" Brian Eno thrown in. For the most part, the songs sound very heartfelt and emotionally earnest, even if the lyrics are a bit intentionally obscure. A particular high point is the title track, in which the surreality of the lyrics reaches a crescendo, giving way to imagery both intriguing and full of despair. "Register My Complaints" is for me the most intuitively moving song of the lot, and could and should find a wider audience. (SJM)

The Ratchets • *Heart of Town* • **Hellbent Records** • Good, old school punk-influenced rock here. There are also some ska influences here, sort of a Clash thing going on. (SH)

The Readymen • *Discography* • **Jump Start Records** • This CD features nineteen tracks from The Readymen. Since the band broke up in the late nineties, it is all their old recordings, mostly from 1994 to 1996. The band came before the big ska craze and their music shows it. Their sound is a more reggae and punk rock influenced ska. The songs are fast paced and fun to listen to. It is a shame that the band is no longer around to perform these songs. (KB)

The Real McKenzies • *10,000 Shots* • **Fat Wreck Chords** • The Real McKenzies are back again with more tales of drinking, partying, and Celtic lore. Even if you are not Scottish you can raise a pint and enjoy their brand of Celtic punk rock. As always they bring along a few traditional songs to which they have added their signature style. (AL)

The Route 66 Killers • *Murder on Beaver Street* • **Gravewax Records** • Even though all of the 16 tracks on this album are original, they sound like they came off a 1960's Dick Dale album. They play surfer music, and that they do well. They also throw in elements of spy music and some flamenco to spice things up a bit. (AL)

The Silent Type • *Hot and Bothered* • *self-released* • Very clever this Silent Type is. I popped this disc in and what I heard almost made me shit myself. They start the CD off with like 30 seconds of some mono instrumental crap recorded on what sounds to be an answering machine. Ahh, but then they quit with the funny and start with the ass-kicking. TST is firmly rooted in rock and roll. Their branches, however, extend in several brash directions—Weezer, At The Drive-In and School of Fish are all influences here. This is a really solid disc that grows on me the more I listen to it. "Blackout," "Americana Blues" and "El Presidente" are brilliant back-to-back tracks that give you a synopsis of what the band does through the rest of the CD. (SH)

The Sonnets • *Mystery Girl* • *Failed Experiment* • This is pure, straight-up garage rock and roll, a fusion of '60s mod, '70s punk rock and glam, and '90s power pop," that drips with attitude. There can be no mistaking the corner of musical taste to which these guys appeal. They rock, end of discussion. Formed in 1992, the Chicago-based Sonnets have had members come and go over the years, but remained a formidable entity. (DP)

The Soviettes • *LP III* • **Fat Wreck** • This is some of the rockin'est girl punk you ever did hear, but there's one catch—the drummer has a penis (shh!). But don't let that stop you... they serve up tight, harmonic, edgy tunes that would make the Go-Go's and the Ramones proud. This, their third LP (duh), will keep your fist pumping in the air and quench that girl rock thirst that exists in us all. Oh yeah, and they're not communists, it's just a clever name. (DP)

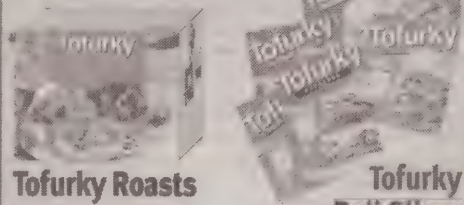
The Structure of a Precise Fashion • *self-titled* • **Lujo Records** • Interesting! Different! I know that does nothing for you but that's what comes to mind. How about experimental emotecore with some new wave tinges? Is that better? Clearly I can't relate them to anyone because I'm not sure there's been a band like this. (SH)

The Templars • *Clockwork Orange Horror Show* • **Templecombe** • This is raw punk, not necessarily raw in a punkcore way, just no-frills, no-polish punk that could have been recorded in a bar. Fun stuff. (SH)

The Warriors • *War Is Hell* • **Eulogy Recordings** • Pioneers of the

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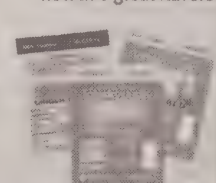


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☆ quickies...a little bit on a lot of records ☆

Panhandle, Eulogy Records have done it again! The Warriors, who I assumed were another typical hardcore band with the same alterations, motives, chants, etc., led me astray with their brand of "abstract hardcore." High pitched screams of massacre mixed with heart pounding breakdowns and abstract euphonies and solos are only a portion of what comprises The Warriors. So many times has a band been described as "unbelievable," however The Warriors are something I've never heard before. Taking the trail paved by typical hardcore and spitting on it, The Warriors are here to fight for the fame which they're destined to achieve and with that comes some really awesome music. (CMax)

This is a Process of a Still Life • Light • Firefly Sessions • The mood created by this instrumental band is one of relaxation and melody. They use plenty of keyboards for this purpose, while multiple guitars are picked in intricate patterns. The percussion keeps everything in check, building or releasing tension with a steady pace. (AL)

Thor • Thor Against the World • Smogveil Records • The first song is actually entitled "Thor Against the World." This album will bring you right back to the eighties. Thor could probably be the ultimate band for a soundtrack to eighty's cartoons like Transformers and Thundercats if you feel me. The key demographic here is late thirties to early forties men with massive mullets and torn t-shirts. Songs like "Serpent's Kiss" and "Glimmer" are straightforward bar songs. However, they would be the band at the bar you were leaving because of. (SP)

Three Piece Combo • self-titled • Feast or Famine Records • The name of this band could not be any more generic. Thankfully, their music is not. Even though one of their rules is "no jamming," some of their instrumental songs go on for quite a few minutes. They change things up constantly, and use elements of prog rock and math rock. (AL)

Thunderlip • self-titled • Lucid Records • Thunderlip plays a blistering brand of garage rock, but they do it with more strut and swagger than those The Bands. Thunderlip thinks they're better than you and they're probably right. With '80s rock riffs, a huge bottom end and the perfect blend of screaming and scratching vocals, this one will grow on you like a glammed-up wart. Check out "Evil on Two Legs" and the nod to "Detroit Rock City" by Kiss. (SH)

To Kill • Watching You Fall • Catalyst Records • If Black Flag re-invented themselves and released a hardcore disc, this would be it. Short, brutal explosions of hardcore power here. (SH)

Traindodge • Torch EP + 2 • No Karma Recordings • The six tracks on here aren't new. However, they are good. The four-song Torch EP is remastered and the other two tracks come from their out-of-print 2001 CD. The music is intense but patient, aggressive while still being sensitive. They are emotionally charged, but they aren't "emo" as the genre is concerned. Parts are mathy, even jazzy in their musical makeup, sometimes even a bit chaotic. The result is a catchy album that gets your attention for its least catchy elements. (CM)

Transient Tractor • Failure • self-released • Oddly, the website for this one-man band admits that the vocal tracks on this record could use some work, and that was going to be my complaint in my initial pre-press-material listening. Once you get past that, the music is quite well crafted and interesting, being quirky and funky rock tunes that sometimes don't need to be more than thirty seconds long to make a point. Definitely a far more enjoyable record than others that have graced my player. I'd shake a stick at it. (DP)

T-Tauri • Infinite Motion • Strictly Amateur Films • This is the swan song of T-Tauri. This experimental synth-emo-core band busted up in 1999. Think NIN meets Dashboard meets Soundgarden. (SH)

Twentyinchburi • How Much Will We Laugh And Smile • Immigrant Sun • I can't say much about this band they are your A typical screamo band. This genre has been so completely played out over the course the past couple of years. This band has the ability to make something amazing but have chosen to go the trusty screamo route. (RP)

Ulver • Blood Inside • Jester Records • Apparently Ulver has been around for quite a while, having been evolving from their black metal roots into all kinds of weird music. They continue that evolution with *Blood Inside*, which is as metal as Iron Maiden is a jazz group. The vocals are highly melodic, harmonized and processed. The music is lush, medium tempo, which sometimes reminds of Pink Floyd at their trippiest. And the animated video for "It is not Sound" is one of the weirder ones I've seen in a while. (AL)

Useless ID • Redemption • Kung Fu • Useless ID formed over a decade ago in Haifa, Israel. This CD is the band's third full-length release on Kung Fu Records. It has everything from fast paced, anthem-like songs, such as *Drinkage*, to melodic and memorable tracks, like *Dying Love*. I think this band has put together a group of songs diverse enough to make a well balanced and enjoyable punk rock album. (KB)

Vanishing Kids • The Selfish Mirror • Failed Experiment Records • Vanishing Kids have a dark and eerie, yet beautiful sound to their music. Their songs seem to be influenced by bands such as The Cure and The Smiths. The alternating male and female vocals are combined with catchy beats and synthesizer melodies. This makes for a very dreamy, new wave influenced, indie album. (KB)

Various Artists • Autonomous Addicts • The Designed Disorder •

The guys at The Designed Disorder assembled this compilation with some pretty kick-ass electronic music. Some recognizable names are here, as well as some upstarts, folks like Richard Devine, Tipper, Eight Frozen Modules, Anon, and Edit. This is not a techno or house music compilation—it leans toward the experimental genres of electronica. (AL)

Various Artists • Hypothetik Disaster • Hip Notik Records • This compilation features a bunch of instrumental hip-hop and electronica tracks to celebrate the launching of the French label Hip Notik. The tracks, mostly by artists I have never heard from (aside from Thavius Beck), are unique in their use of different sounds and beats. It is well worth your time to check it out if you want to experience something new. (AL)

Various Artists • House of Yoshi: The Collection • Yoshitoshi Recordings • If you are a fan of house music, you may have already heard music from the Yoshitoshi label. I am not a particularly huge house fan and I had heard some of the songs here. In any case, this is their first ever compilation, with a mix of 13 tracks from Sumo, Eddie Amador, Deepsky, Miguel Migs and others. (AL)

Various Artists • Kamikaze Ass Chomp n' Stomp CD Sampler, Vol. 4 • Estrus Records • Oh boy. I have NO idea where to go with this. There are a ton of different sounds on here. This would be a phenomenal CD to put on when you're throwing a bash or just hanging out. If you're not really in the mood for anything in particular, this is for you. There's something for everyone here—Japanese pop, punk, jazz, rock...everything. Really. If you put your favorite six CDs in your changer and hit shuffle, this is what you'd hear. (SH)

Various Artists • Listen or Pose • Abacus Records • If you are a fan of hardcore I highly recommend this CD it features many great hardcore bands such as Bleeding Kansas, Turmoil, and Embrace. All the tracks on this CD are really great so go buy it rules. (RP)

Various Artists • Mixo De Punko! Vol. 2 • Let Them Eat Records • This compilation features twenty-two songs from various local California bands. It also features music videos from The Missing 23rd, California Redemption, Caught Off Guard, and two from Ill Repute. The style of music featured on the CD ranges from punk rock to hardcore. There is very little transition time in between the songs so the compilation is an adrenaline rush from start to finish. (KB)

Various Artists • Punk Goes 80's • Fearless Records • These compilations have been around for a few years...today's punk bands recording cover songs of metal songs, or pop songs, and now, 80's songs. They tend to be pretty good, particularly for us who are old enough to have been around when the originals came along. I must say I was surprised to hear that the songs were not performed as punk songs, but as slightly harder versions of the originals. One of the standout tracks is The Early November redoing Huey Lewis & The News's "Power of Love" as a slow ballad. (AL)

Various Artists • Sounds From a Big Town • Chocolate Fireguard Music • This is a three-CD compilation with the goal of promoting the music scene at Huddersfield, England. One CD features Urban, Hip Hop and Chill, the second Dance music, and the third Guitar Music, which has everything from folk to ska, alternative, and metal. I have to admit that I had never heard from most of the artists here, but enjoyed most of the tracks. (AL)

Various Artists • Take Penicillin Now • G-7 Welcoming Committee • The cover of this compilation CD is copy of the letter that was sent to Senator Daschle containing anthrax, hence the title of the album (pulled from the letter contained inside). The 19 tracks compile a collection of bands that have worked with G-7 over the years. That means you get a mix of styles, from speedcore to hip-hop to punk to hardcore to rock. The album includes a new, unreleased track from Propagandhi (and it's so good!), unreleased tracks from Randy, The Weakerthans, Greg MacPherson, Submission Hold and plus tracks from The (International) Noise Conspiracy, Consolidated, But Alive and others. It's a great collection of a variety of excellent bands. (CM)

Various Artists • Takeover 3-Way Issue #2 • Takeover Records • This compilation features three previously unreleased tracks by each of the three different up and coming bands. NearMiss (Takeover Records), the more hardcore influenced band on the comp, starts the CD off with a lot of energy. Next up is Reeve Oliver (The Militia Group). This band, with its fast paced and fun songs, ended up being my favorite on the CD. The Matches (Epitaph Records) ended the CD with two of their three songs being acoustic. One of these acoustic songs was *Sick Little Suicide*. Though I like the original version of this song more, the other two Matches tracks were just what I would expect from them. All three of the bands showcased their unique style through their songs. This compilation is the perfect combination to gain new fans for these bands, as well as please the old ones. (KB)

Vocab Malone • Happy Hardcore • self-released • There are some really nice sounds on this Vocab Malone release. The spirit of hip-hop is easily evident throughout this collection of songs that pay homage to the old-school style circa 1980's. Vocab sounds like a big fan of the Beastie Boys, only I'm not sure that he's Jewish, as he has a tendency to drop religious shout-outs here and there. *Happy Hardcore* is self described as being a "best of both worlds" per say, a contrast that finds this Phoenix emcee mostly having a good time

raping positively while using a basic rhyme dictionary. DJ Cre One provides the goods, while Vocab has a good time. (JC)

Voltage • Building the Bass Castle, Vol. 1 • Flameshovet Records • These two guys play instrumental music that will have you thinking of Hella, but with a bit less randomness. They are at once math-rock and experimental, with slow periods and fast periods. (AL)

We Are Wolves • Non-Stop • Fat Possum Records • This is spastic, electro punk rock at its finest. Distorted vocals and keyboards galore gave this band an edge. Sometimes the band takes the catchy, pop side of this dance rock along the lines of VHS or Beta. Other times, it's just analog synth rock with an originality that makes it hard for comparison. The random noises sometimes distort the songs, making it hard to wait through to find the real song, but the payoff is worth it. (MP)

Windsor for the Derby • Giving Up the Ghost • Secretly Canadian Records • This band seems to be searching for their voice. While the songs "Empathy for People Unknown" and "Praise" endlessly strive for some sort of impact, they never quite seem to attain this state. The most unfocused part of this band is the vocals. They are hard to understand and lack any type of hook to catch your attention. This new wave indie band should learn the importance of the pop factor before releasing another record of nothingness. The thought of listening to this album in entirety frightens me. (SP)

Yellowcard • Where We Stand • Takeover Records • Where We Stand was originally released in 1999 with a different singer and an extra guitarist. Both of these elements make this album very different from the current Yellowcard releases. The enhanced CD features never before seen footage of the band and a twenty-four page insert of old photographs from their early days. These two extras give a small glimpse into the days of the original Yellowcard. The songs are not as pop oriented as they are today but the violin and unique Yellowcard sound can still be heard. The songs are fast, intricate, and showcase why this band got to where it is today. (KB)

Yesterdays Rising • Lightworkers • Fearless Records • Yesterdays Rising is one of those bands that are mixing rock, hardcore, metal, and indie rock. The vocals switch between singing and screaming, but are not remarkable. The music keeps a consistent energy level throughout the album. I suspect these guys are a lot better live than on record. (AL)

Yip Yip • Pro-Twelve Thinker • Strictly Amateur Films • Longwood, FL's Yip Yip are pretty out there. They play electronic music that sometimes seems improvised and is pretty experimental. They stick with hard beats and sounds that create an ominous, stressful mood. Check out the enclosed video to see them in action with their white jumpsuits and bug-eyed gas mask-looking-things. (AL)

DVD releases

Various Artists • Burn To Shine 2: Chicago 9-14-04 • Trixie DVD • This is the second DVD in a series that gathers a group of bands to play inside a house that is slated for demolition. It is an unusual way to shoot live footage, as the house in this case was quite small, making the camera angles quite tight. The result is that you feel like you are right there. It was recorded in HD and multitrack, so the quality of the audio and video is excellent. This installment features tracks by Pit Er Pat, Shellac, Wilco, Red Eyed Legends, and more, but my favorite was the track by The Lonesome Organist, who plays accordion, drums and keyboard all at once! (AL)

Various Artists • Secret Weapons of Kung Fu Vol. 3 • Kung Fu • This is the third installment of *Secret Weapons of Kung Fu*. This DVD has everything from music videos to live performances from Kung Fu Records. *The Show Must Go On* series. There are also some fan submitted, contest winning Vandal videos as well as a video shot for the *Vandals in Iraq DVD*. Other bands included on *Secret Weapons* are The Dance Hall Crashers, The Circle Jerks, The Bouncing Souls, Tsunami Bomb, and Throw Rag, just to name a few. These are all well established bands that produce fast and enjoyable music. In my opinion, as far as DVDs go, Kung Fu has no competition. (KB)

Vinyl releases

Drums and Tuba • El Tubador/The Peleton 7" • Sickroom Records • This band would get lost in the shuffle of instrumental bands, were it not for their use of tuba and trumpet. El Tubador tends to change a lot, slowing down and speeding up here and there. "El Peleton" is a more subdued track, establishing more of a groove. (AL)

Mossa • Slavery When Wet b/w Gastrula 12" • Orac Records • Mossa's music is rooted in techno, but his sounds are unconventional. It is a bit colder and more machine-like than others, with beats that are cold and vocal samples that are digitally manipulated. This 12" features 2 songs and 2 remixes. (AL)

Various Artists • Volume One 12" • Adjunct Audio • Adjunct Audio was founded by Kenneth James Gibson from [a]pendixes.shuffle and Orac Records' Konstantin Gabbro. The four tracks featured here are of minimal techno with a cold, machine-like feel to them. Pretty much the stuff you get coming out of the Orac label. [a]pendixes shuffle contributes one track, as well as Pheek, John Tejada, and Bruno Ponsato. (AL)

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America, Wake Up!

(AMERICA, continued from page 43)

can afford security... If the owner cannot pay his taxes, do we still let him own the building?"

A concluding chapter is nonexistent; the authors have given no summary of evidence at all. They've given readers no reason to suspect that they have ever read any of the literature in the field of private security, let alone that they understand the issues fairly. ❧

Robert Williams taught in prisons in England and Ohio, and was a member of the 2064th Communications Squadron's Disaster Preparedness Team on Shemya Island, AK.

War Made Easy

(WAR, continued from page 42)

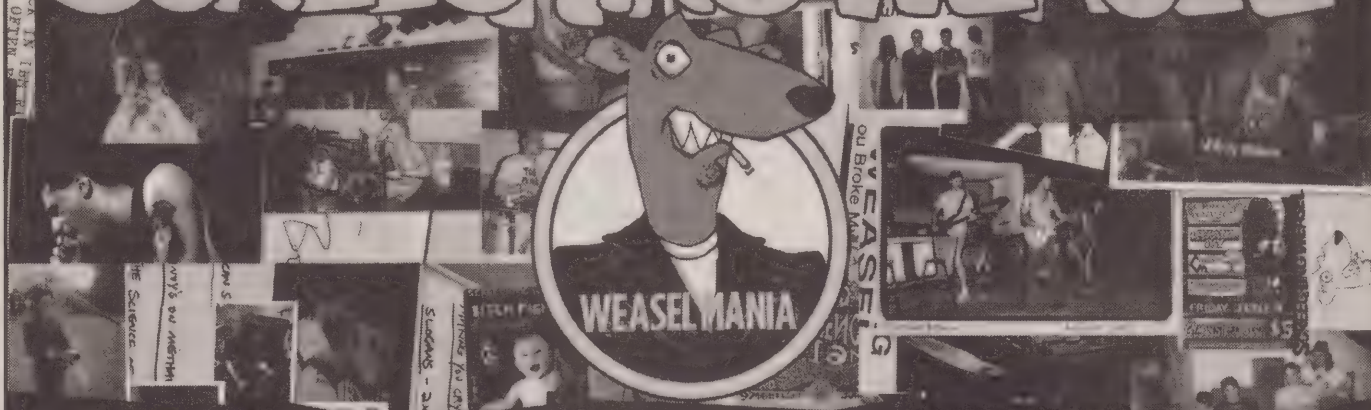
me that we—journalists and citizens alike—are so easily tricked into criminal violence specifically because we have such a strong belief in our own innocence. Solomon's portrayal of citizens and, to a lesser extent, journalists as the hapless dupes of duplicitous politicians suggests that he also embraces the myth of American innocence. While the hope that this gives him is heartening, I wonder if his faith might be misplaced.

Nonetheless, this is an important book that should be read by anyone unfamiliar with the rhetoric and reality of recent military engagements. However, the readers who need this book the most might have the hardest time with it.

This book might also be difficult for readers without a good grasp of recent U.S. history. While Solomon fully explains the deceptive dynamics of some military interventions (such as Lyndon Johnson's 1965 invasion of the Dominican Republic), his discussions of some episodes (such as incidences of media bias in its coverage of U.S.-sponsored violence in El Salvador in the 1980s) may not make sense to readers who do not already know what really happened. For such readers, I'd suggest reading Solomon's book in tandem with the relevant chapters in Howard Zinn's *People's History of the United States* or Alexander Cockburn's *Corruptions of Empire*. ❧



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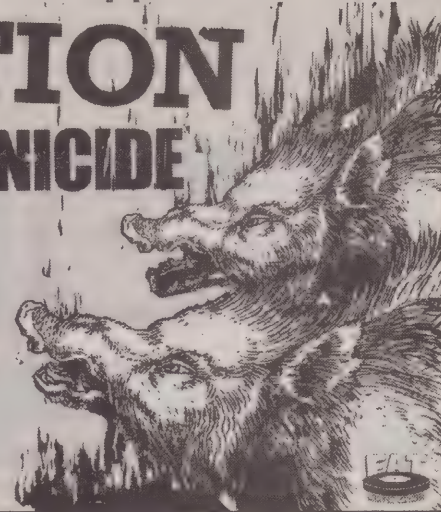
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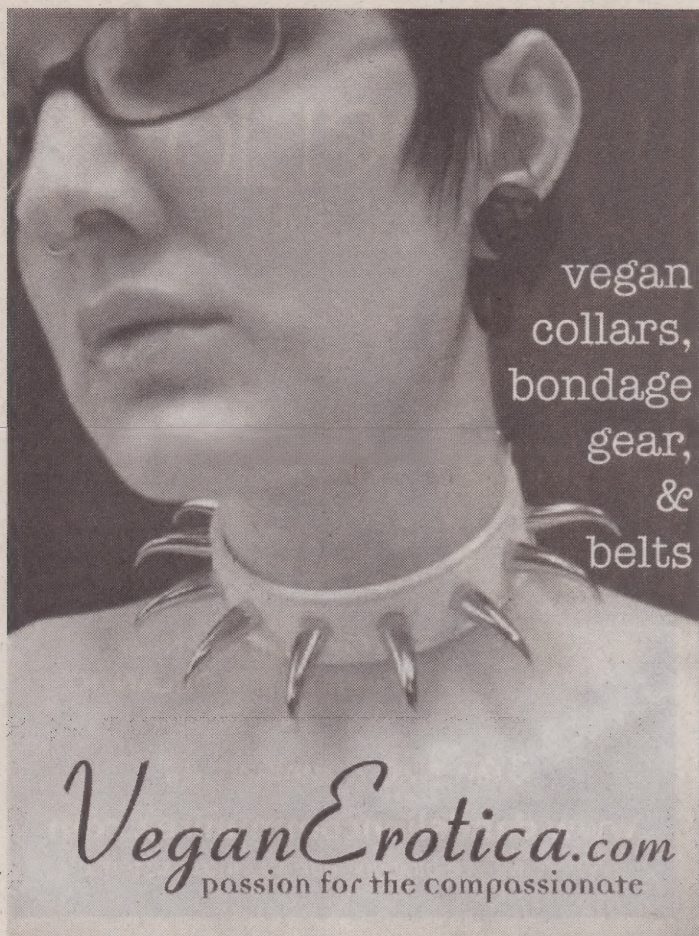


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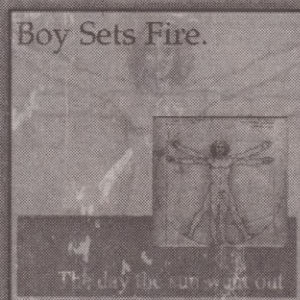


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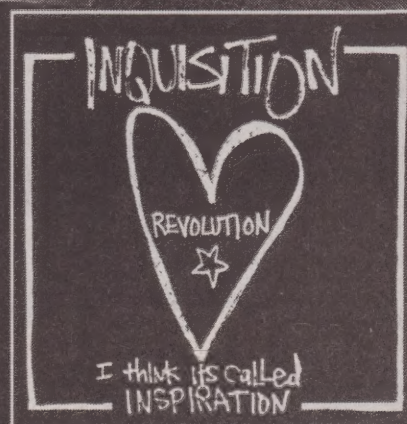
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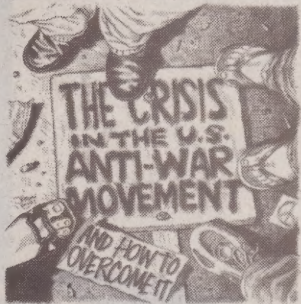
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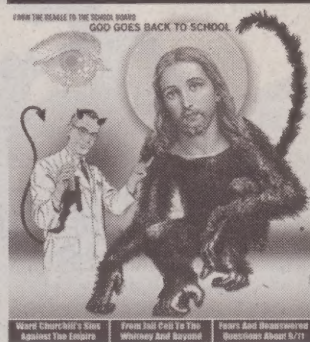
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